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DC SUMMER PREVIEW

COMICS CREATORS GUILD AWARD WINNER

COMIC World

MAY 1994

ISSUE NO 27

NEIL GAIMAN CHRIS BACHALO & MARK BUCKINGHAM PICK UP THEIR AWARDS

MADE IN AMERICA: HOWARD CHAYKIN'S POWER & GLORY

JERRY ORDWAY'S POWER OF SHAZAM

MADE IN BRITAIN NEW BRITISH CREATORS MAKING A BIG IMPACT IN THE USA

MAD IN BRITAIN WARREN ELLIS LAUNCHES 'SMOKE DAMAGE'

CONAN * PURR QUARTERLY * NEWS

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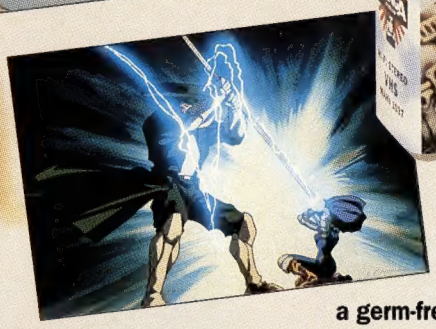
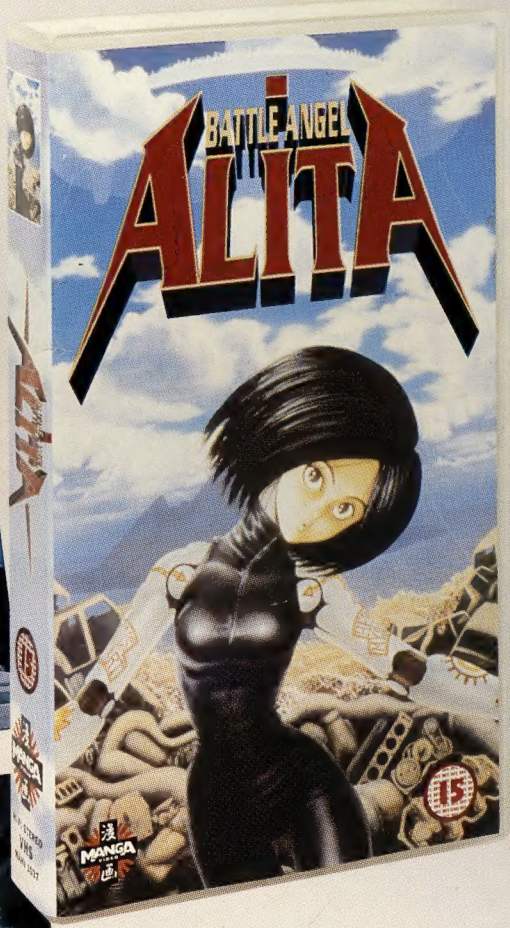
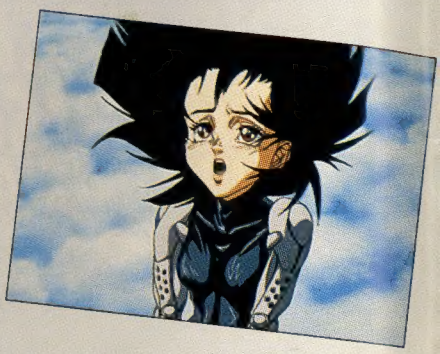
BATTLE ANGEL ALITA







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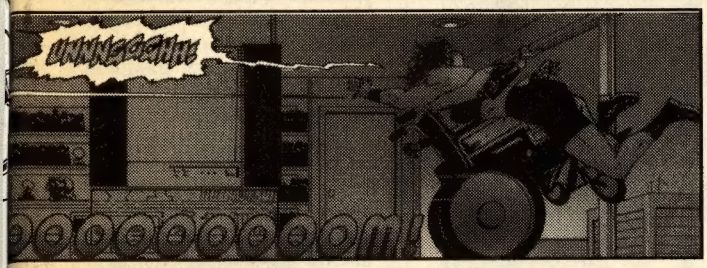

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It's like something out of a George Romero film here as I write this. Everyone's red-eyed and zombified. Since last month we've had the Glasgow Comic Art Convention, which always knocks schedules into a cocked hat and, for me, it was straight back into the endless - but always enjoyable - round of interviews: fly back Monday, research Tuesday, interview Wednesday. Both Corinne and I have celebrated birthdays, there was a bank holiday to contend with, and training-up new boys to the mag., Polar, who join our team this month and John Walters who joins as assistant editor to take some of the weight off my shoulders.

My thoughts on Glasgow are no secret: I loved it. It's far more relaxed than London's UK Comic Art Convention, less crowded which means you can spend more time with people; the site this year had a more intimate atmosphere, and sometimes it looked like the pros outnumbered the fans. Attendance wasn't overwhelming but I hear that most of the dealers thought it worth their while, most of the professionals had a great time, even if it's not really a holiday for them, and most of them have got over the shock to the system of actually having time to party.

The Saturday morning Masterclass panel was my only real work, and I'd like to thank David Lloyd, Mark Buckingham, Janet Jackson and Dick Foreman for their efforts and insights into the business. I'm sure they'd also like to thank everyone who packed the hall to join in.

The most vigorous panel was probably for Sunday morning 'Do we want a British comics industry?' Few people had heard the news that Dark Horse Internationial had just had the rug pulled from under them, and I believe that both fans and professionals have been forced to seriously think about their futures over the past couple of months. In 1993 there was little enough work to spread around the ever- growing professional community; the closure of Marvel UK's direct market line and the death of DHI means even less work around for 1994.

The shrinking of the indiginous British industry cannot be coupled with the widely reported fluctuating direct market. The latter isn't purely a British problem but an industry-wide side effect of direct sales, speculation, being forced to guess market trends and horrific late shipping. The British market, with sale or return newsstand comics, shouldn't suffer the same problems. They're a breed apart. The falling sales of British newsstand comics have been seen as a symptom of the industry's overall problems. I'm sorry, but they're not.

Falling sales are a symptom you can try to keep at bay with free gifts, but nobody seems to be looking for a cure. Don't bleat that there's no market any more. All 8-16 year-olds have not just suddenly emigrated to Australia. They're still at home - they're just not reading comics. That's the disease that needs addressing. Not how to attract adult readers, because apart from those of you reading this, few adults know how to read a graphic novel. It's too many worlds apart from what they read as kids. It just confuses them. The lifeblood of the British industry is its younger readers, and at that age the arguements are very black and white: like or don't like. And they obviously don't like. Is anyone asking them what they want to see?

Contributors: Paul H. Birch, Steve Cook, Neil Cooper, Paul Duncan, Warren Ellis, Richard Hill, Dave McLoughlin, John Mosby, Pete Taylor, Alan Woollcombe, Jamie Woolley

Cover: More than just a sad old anthem by those has-beens of heavy metal, Saxon. Only in America could they create The American Powerhouse, and only Howard Chaykin could create the Americans who would create a superhero. You can meet the American Powerhouse in *Power and Glory*, and Howard Chaykin here in 25 pages time. Power & Glory is © & ™ Howard Chaykin, and used by permission. Thanks also to Tom Mason and all at Malibu.

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Dark Horse International close

In a move that has surprised and shocked many supporters of the indigenous comic industry amongst the British creative community, Dark Horse International, the London based publishing arm of Dark Horse Comics, was suspended on Tuesday, March 15. In a press release issued by Dark Horse on March 16, Mike

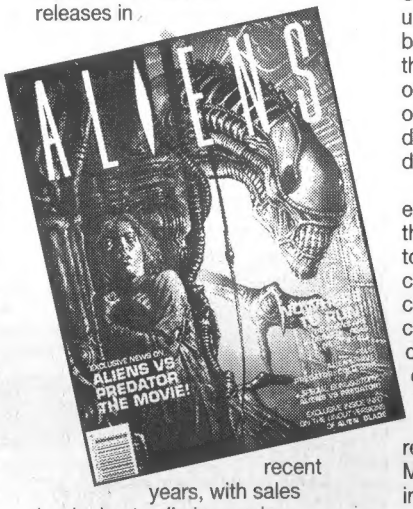
Richardson, President of Dark Horse, said "We've spent the last few weeks reassessing the goals at Dark Horse and are making adjustments to reflect those new goals. In the direct market's current volatile climate it's imperative that publishers support the retailers who have themselves supported the tremendous growth of the comics publishers in recent years. To do our part Dark Horse has brought in both Lou Bank and Michael Martens, two well respected industry spokesmen who have always striven for excellence in customer service. They'll be increasing marketing activity for the company, and as such we're giving them the healthiest budget Dark Horse has ever had for supporting our publishing plans."

Sadly, this support did not stretch as far as the U.K. "During this realignment of funds we'll be suspending production at the London office of Dark Horse International (U.K.) Inc.. The climate in the comics market is such that we have to pay more attention to detail, and it has become clear that at this time our main focus should be on the direct market comics industry."

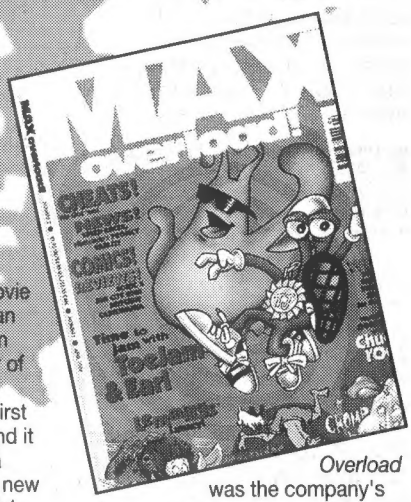
Dark Horse International, set up in January 1992, had maintained a steady flow of reprint material onto the British newsstands, their titles led by *Aliens*, which initially took over the numbering of Trident Publications' licensed publication with issue 17 (June 1992). The next two months saw the renumbering of *Aliens* and the release of the *Aliens3* movie tie-in. Dick Hansom soon established himself as Editorial Director of the titles, with Cefn Ridout arriving soon after, at first assisting Hansom and later editing most of the titles.

Two further titles were added in October, *Terminator* and *Star Wars*, two of Dark Horses most popular licensed series. The initial announcement of the London office to have produced five monthly titles by the end of their first year was achieved with the addition of *Dracula* (at first reprinting the movie adaptation) and *Total Carnage*, an anthology of stories ranging from 'Batman Vs Predator' and 'Army of Darkness' to 'The Mask' and 'Grendel'. *Terminator* was their first cancellation, in January 1993, and it seemed that the company had a solid base from which to launch new titles as they entered their second year of publishing.

The summer of 1993 saw the end of *Star Wars* (July) and *Dracula* (August), but the addition of *Jurassic Park* and *Manga Mania*, the latter running to 130-pages a month. It has proved to be one of the successes of British releases in recent years, with sales beginning to climb as anime became more readily available in the UK.



The recently launched *Max*



Overload was the company's first magazine to feature all-new material, although most of the titles had contained new features and interviews. When the announcement was made, new issues of *Max Overload* and *Aliens* were still in production, as was the 11th issue of *Manga Mania*. As of writing, *Max Overload #2* has appeared, but it is unknown whether the other titles will be distributed. There is a chance that at least one title will be taken over by another publisher, but most of the others can be considered dead, or at the very best be described as 'in limbo'.

"Dark Horse intends to re-establish our British operation when the retail climate is more conductive to the venture," Richardson continued in his statement. "We will continue to work with British creators in producing comics for the direct market as we feel that some of the finest work published under the Dark Horse banner has come from these creators. We're retaining Liliana Bolton, DHI Managing Director, to represent our interests in the UK creative community and are confident that with her attention turned to market indicators we'll be back into that arena before long."

DC's Summer Preview

DC Comics have just released it's massive editorial presentation for 1994, *The Time Is Right...*, weighing in at 336-pages, making it the largest presentation released by any company to date. Covering some 150 titles to be published over the next year or so, the book covers in some detail what will be happening in titles over the next twelve months. Please note that some of the material that follows reveals a few surprises in store. Spoiler warning over.

In his introduction, Bob Wayne, DC's Director of direct market sales, noted that DC were the publisher of the fastest-selling book in the history of comics, and pledged the company's support for the industry over the next year.

VERTIGO

Vamps is a 6-issue series by Elaine Lee & William Simpson, a modern biker tale featuring five sexy women vampires, one of them chased by an even greater horror.

The Invisibles has already been delayed from its announced July slot, but when it comes, it'll be by Grant Morrison, plus various artists. Steve Yeowell and Jill Thompson will illustrate the first two storylines about a secret society of occult subversives who exist at all points in time and space.

Gary Ushaw & Warren Pleece tell the 6-issue tale of Mobfire and Jack Pepper, the reluctant head of Britain's first family of crime. He wants to go legit, but his right hand man, a black magician, has other ideas. John Constantine will make a guest appearance, the book launching in September.

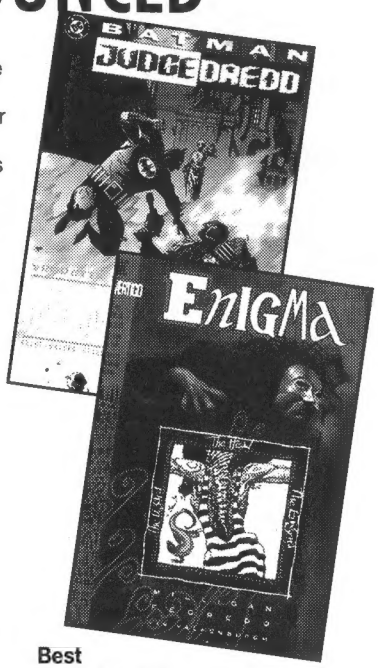
Also for September comes Shadows Fall by John Ney Rieber. Warren Gale should have died, but a police bullet with his name on was stopped by an innocent girl. On that day Warren forfeited his soul and his shadow, which escapes to show people their futile lives and leads to a rash of suicides. 6-issues, fully painted by John Van Fleet.

There's also a unique reprinting of J.M. DeMatteis & Jon J. Muth's Moonshadow, previously published by Epic in 1985-87. Moonshadow is a young boy bought up in a galactic zoo, son of a Brooklyn girl and an alien lightglobe.

Continued on page 16

UK COMIC ART AWARDS ANNOUNCED

The fifth UK Comic Art Awards were presented at Glasgow on Sunday, March 20th by Convention organiser Frank Plowright. Voted for by the professional community, the awards will this year be listed by the *Guiness Book Of Winners* - as will the *Comic World* Reader's Awards. Our congratulations to all the winners and runners up.



Best Writer: Peter Milligan (2nd: Frank Miller; 3rd: Garth Ennis)
Best Artist: Duncan Fegredo (2nd: Glenn Fabry; 3rd: Frank Quitely)
Best Writer/Artist: Frank Miller (2nd: Nick Abadzis; 3rd: Dan Clowes)
Best Newcomer: Frank Quitely (2nd: Chris Sprouse; 3rd: Kilian Plunkett)
Best Auxiliary Contributor: Ellie De Ville (2nd: Steve Oliff; 3rd: Gina Hart)
Best New Publication: Man Without Fear (2nd: The Enigma; 3rd: Strange Embrace)

Best Publisher: DC Comics (2nd: Fleetway; 3rd (tie): Dark Horse & Vertigo)
Best Ongoing Publication: Judge Dredd Megazine (2nd: 2000AD; 3rd: Hellblazer)
Best Original Graphic Novel: Vendetta in Gotham (2nd: Casanova's Last Stand; 3rd: Hugo Tate: O, America) **Best Book Collection: Hugo Tate: O, America** (2nd: The Collected Bone; 3rd: Death: The High Cost of Living)
Special Career Achievement Award: Will Eisner (2nd: Alan Moore; 3rd: Alan Grant)

★★US NEWSBRIEF★★

CLAYPOOL

Claypool have announced that they will now be 'self-published' and are cutting all ties to Eclipse. Editor Richard Howell said that "Rumours of Claypool's demise have no basis. In fact, we're starting our second year on a stronger footing than before. Once our new distribution system staff is in place, we'll be looking into plans to get the Claypool books out on more retail shelves where fans can find them."

Due to ship in May are *Elvira, Mistress of Darkness #13*, and *Deadbeats #7*.

DARK HORSE

Dark Horse launch 12 new titles and one-shots for May, the most anticipated one here being *Martha Washington Goes to War #1*, the latest 5-issue in the life of Martha from *Give Me Liberty*. Written by Frank Miller and drawn by Dave Gibbons, Martha's latest exploits take her to 2014, the second American Civil War and the badlands of New Mexico to fight the Fatboy Burger Corporation.

In alphabetical order then, we have: *Aliens: Stonghold #1* (of 4) by John Arcudi & Doug Mahnke where a routine supply run turns into a biotechnologists nightmare (or maybe a dream in the case of Caspar Nordling); *Caravan Kidd Part 3 #1* by Johji Manabe has Mian and her companions prepared for the final assault on Kyuraweil Keep before continuing their journey - except Mian knows that something terrible is about to happen; *Dark Horse Comics*

TOP30

TOP 30

1 (2) **X-Men #33** (Marvel)
2 (3) **Uncanny X-Men #313** (Marvel)
3 (-) **Spawn #21** (Image)
4 (5) **Sandman #61** (DC)
5 (-) **Uncanny X-Men Annual #18** (Marvel)
6 (6) **X-Force #35** (Marvel)
7 (7) **X-Factor #103** (Marvel)
8 (-) **X-Men Unlimited #5** (Marvel)
9 (10) **WildC.A.T.S. #10** (Image)
10 (8) **Adventures of Cyclops & Phoenix #2** (Marvel)
11 (6) **Wolverine #82** (Marvel)
12 (-) **Superman/Doomsday: Hunter/Prey #1** (DC)
13 (-) **Superman/Doomsday: Hunter/Prey #2** (DC)
14 (11) **X-Men 2099 #9** (Marvel)
15 (12) **Hellblazer #78** (DC)
16 (14) **Sin City: A Dame to Kill For #6** (Dark Horse)
17 (15) **Previews vol 4:#4** (Diamond)
18 (13) **Batman #508** (DC)
19 (17) **Legends of the Dark Knight #61** (DC)
20 (21) **Excalibur #78** (Marvel)
21 (20) **Cable #12** (Marvel)
22 (-) **Action Comics #700** (DC)
23 (19) **Detective Comics #675: Collectors Edition** (DC)
24 (26) **Batman: Shadow of the Bat #28** (DC)
25 (-) **Cyberforce #4** (Image)
26 (23) **Incredible Hulk #418: Collectors Edition** (Marvel)
27 (24) **Spider-Man 2099 #19** (Marvel)
28 (25) **Amazing Spider-Man #390: Collectors Edition** (Marvel)
29 (-) **Daredevil #329** (Marvel)
30 (-) **Superman #90** (DC)

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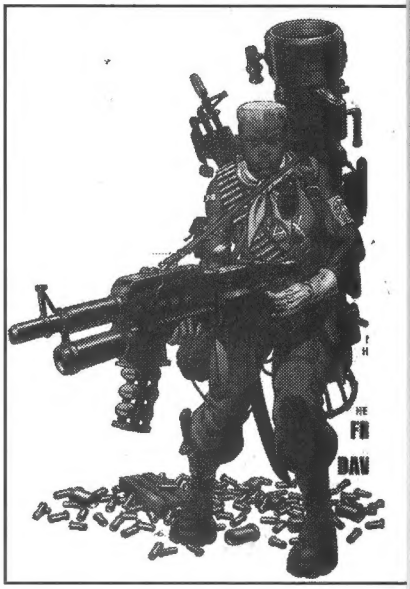

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★★US★★ NEWSBRIEF CONTINUED

#21 has an Eddie Campbell & Peter Ford Mecha story beginning as the CGW star moves to Chicago in the two-part 'Urban Renewal'; *Dark Horse Downunder #1* is an anthology of stories by Eddie Campbell, Fil Barlow, and Gary Chaloner & Ashley Wood; *Enemy #1* (of 5) by Steven Grant, Christopher Schenck & Shepherd Hendrix is resolicited from last October. Same story: is the Enemy a serial killer called The Zigzag Wanderer or a vigilante dealing death and justice; *Grendel Tales: The Devil in Our Midst #1* (of 5) by Steve Seagal & Paul Grist introduces the new Grendel, known only as Jonah. The book also includes the latest chapter in Matt Wagner's 'Grendel- Prime' story.

OK, relax for a second. Now, take a deep breath. Ready?

James Bond: Shattered Helix #1 (of 2) by Simon Jowett, David Jackson & David Lloyd has Bond facing Cerberus once again, this time trying to release a genetically- engineered virus from an Antarctic base...and if you're wondering what happened to Simon's previous Bond series, well, part 3 is finished, and part 4 underway, but they're waiting until the whole lot is in the bag before resoliciting the series. And, Simon, have you ever worked for *2000AD*? Aren't you an artist? (sorry, private Glasgow joke, folks); *Jonny Demon #1* (of 3) by Kurt Busiek & Neil Vokes. Johnny is a smart- mouthed punk, would-be sorcerer and survivor on a bodyguarding job which turns into a suicide run, putting him head to head with the Returned Ones; *Mezz Galactic Tour* by Mike Baron, Vosburg & Mitchell follows Mezz from the pages of *Nexus* who finds his Galactic Tour is in chaos thanks to his tour organiser, Vooper, and his band replaced with duplicates; *Titan Special* is written by Peter Ford & Michael Eury with art by Chris Sprouse, John Watkins Chow, Karl Story & Shane Glines, the ex-Golden City hero, Frank Wells, has now joined the government, but his first mission for the Feds might be his last. The story ties into next month's CGW follow-up, *Will to Power*, the first CGW cross-over which heavily features Titan; *White Like She #1* (of 4) by Bob Fingerman which is pretty much indescribable from the information we have here, but seems to be the not very PC team up of a middle-aged black janitor and a white teenage Jewish lesbian. Whales may die.

Classic Star Wars #20 is the final issue, a 48-page special reprinting the last of the daily strips from the early '80s by Archie Goodwin & Al Williamson.

DEFIANT

Deborah Purcell has left Defiant's Editorial Director post to pursue other interests, replaced by *Dark Dominion* penciller, Joe James. Ed Polgardy has been bumped up to Senior Editor.

Schism is the title of Defiant's summer crossover which will include every Defiant hero in one 4-part, 48-page per issue, mini-series.

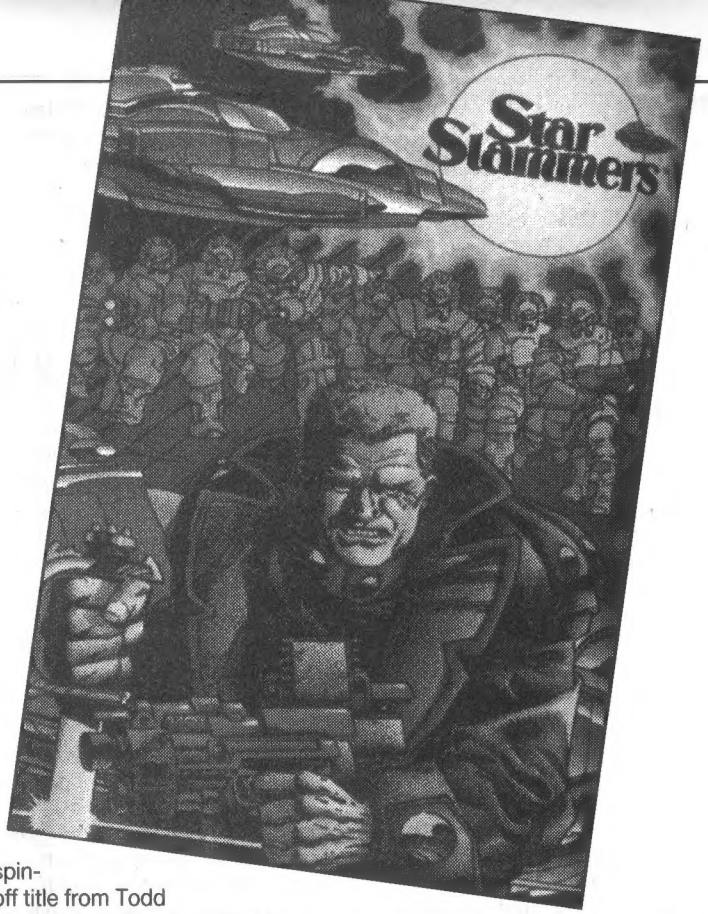
The latest new title from Defiant is the 48-page *Prudence & Caution #1* which ships in May. Created by Jim Shooter & Chris Claremont, the series is written by Claremont with art by Jim Fern. The unlikely team consists of a charming, pretty young lady, who just happens to conquer planets for a living, and an earnest young man who has the strength of 200 and a genetically engineered symbiotic left arm with a mind of its own. *Prudence & Caution* is also available in a Spanish edition, testing the ground amongst the Hispanic population.

IMAGE

The 'Images of Tomorrow' titles ship in May. Fast forward to the future in *Brigade #25* in which Battlestone leads the Youngblood team against his former teammates, Brigade, and Coldsnap's transformation reaches a critical phase; in *Bloodstrike #25* Combat joins Pilot to lead the Bloodstrike team against a Katellan outpost in Arizona, and Chapel returns from his own mini-series; and in *StormWatch #25* the team wage a desperate struggle with WarGuard and their leader, Patriarch. Only Battalion, wrenched out of time by TimeSpan, has any chance of defeating the man who will become the team's greatest enemy; and in *Supreme #25*, Supreme joins the Starguard to battle his deadliest enemy - Supreme!

Guest shots this month include StormWatch in the pages of *Code Name: StrykeForce #4*, and Pitt pops up in *Gen-13 #4* which also has the last coupon for the *Gen-13 #0*.

The Violator is the first, 3-part,



spin-
off title from Todd McFarlane's *Spawn*, written by Alan Moore with art by Bart Sears & Mark Pennington (Greg Capullo takes over #3). The failed Hellspawn is dumped on Earth with no powers, and has to struggle to stay alive while trying to regain them.

KITCHEN SINK

From the pages of *2000AD* comes the collected *Button Man* by John Wagner & Arthur Ranson. Winner of last year's *Comic World* reader's poll for both Best Story and Best Artist, the *Button Man* is comic *noir* at its best. The 96-page softcover is priced $15.95.

Also released in May is the collected 224-page softcover *The Crow* by James O'Barr to tie in with the release of the movie. Also included is a colour section reprinting the covers to the first seven issues and new material by creator O'Barr.

MALIBU

The Bravura line continues to expand with *Star Slammers #1* (of 5) by Walt Simonson. The slammers were a military race who became so good at their jobs that they turned it into the most profitable business in the galaxy. This new series takes place many years after the events in Simonson's previous storylines about the group, 'The Minoan Agendas' concentrating on the events that surround the capture of Slammer, Rojas.

The Ultraverse line continues to grow with *Warstrike #1* by Dan Danko, Huang Nguyen & Bob Downs, who previously appeared in *Mantra #1* and 'Ultraverse Premiere'. In his first issue, Warstrike finds a routing kidnapping turning into something far deeper, the trail leading him to South America.

Prime #12 is the host to *Ultraverse Premier #3* which contains the third episode of 'Elven' in which Warstrike battles Prime.

TOPPS

Mars Attacks is an all-new five issue series by Keith Giffen & Charlie Adlard based on the famous card series of the fifties. Len Brown, who co-created the series tells the never-revealed story of why the Martians invade in a special back-up series. Also included in the first issue is a pull-out poster which gives details of

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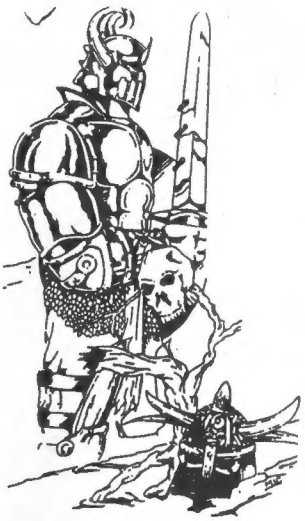

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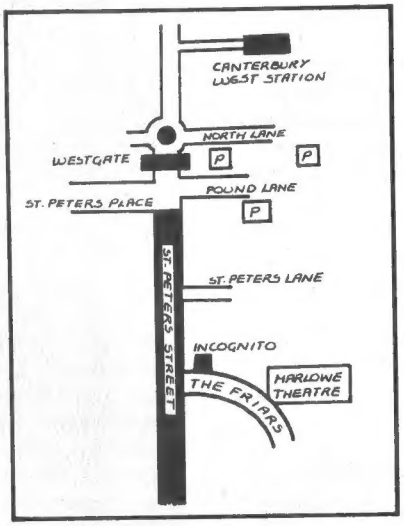


★★US★★ NEWSBRIEF CONTINUED

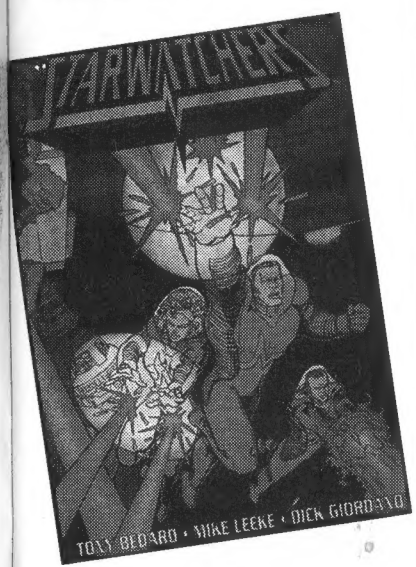
the original set.

Ray Bradbury Comics Special: Tales of Horror #1 contains two new stories, 'The Skeleton' by Brit team Anthony Williams & Stephen Baskerville, plus 'Uncle Einer' by Lar Hokansen, plus a classic EC reprint by Wally Wood.

VALIANT

Joe Quesada has quit Valiant following the extremely successful launch of *Ninjak*. He will leave with issue #3. Marty Stever of Valiant said: "Because (Joe) had fallen so far behind on his deadlines, Valiant chose to schedule an alternative penciller for one issue of the series. Quesada felt that this would interfere with his development of the Ninjak character and has removed himself from the book".

Quesada said, "I always intended to pencil the first six episodes of *Ninjak*, as well as *Ninjak #0*. I was doing everything possible to get the series back on schedule, and it is with great regret that readers will not see me accomplish this goal." The new penciller for the



series is Mark Moretti.

Kevin VanHook will be leaving *Eternal Warrior* with issue 26 to concentrate on *The Visitor*, due next December. *The Visitor* will be a vital link in the Valiant continuity chain. VanHook has said, "We're already dropping hints about who or what The Visitor is," adding, "we are not going to say when he or she will first appear or if he/she has already appeared."

Starwatchers #1 is the latest in Valiant's far future titles set in 4020, as are *Magnus #39* and *Rai #24*, 17 years after the Malev War. The mysterious Starwatchers arrive from deep space to offer their protection to Earth. No-one trusts them until the Spider aliens invade Titan. Written by Tony Bedard, with art by Mike Leeke & Dick Giordano, the first issue is offered in 'Valiant Vision' and comes in a wraparound chromium cover.

In May there's the second 'Annual Brotherly Love Team-Up' in *Archer & Armstrong #25*, the story continuing in *Eternal Warrior #25* which tells the story of how Armstrong originally ticked off the group known as The Sect.

Someone - who? - dies in *Secret Weapons #12* as they battle, er, someone else. Will another someone else help them survive? Valiant are keeping this one a secret...

Also in May, there's the *Turok, Dinosaur Hunter Yearbook* by Mike Baron & Dave Cockrum, which matches Turok against Mon-Ark from *Turok #1-3*, and the *Unity Trade Paperback #1*, collecting together chapters 0-4 of the now classic crossover which will be reprinted in 4 volumes.

MARVEL NEWS

BLADE

The Nightstalkers are shattered forever when Hannibal King and Frank Drake are killed, and it's left to Blade to go it alone.
Blade the Vampire Hunter #1

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MARVEL NEWS CONTINUED

ships on May 31, written by Ian Edginton, with art by Doug Wheatley & Chris Ivy. Blade will be pitched against a new breed of scientifically-spawned vampires known as the Bloodstorm. The greatest vampire of them all also returns - Dracula. And the way he comes back will blow you away.

MARVEL ROUND-UP

Things are hotting up in Marvel's Cosmic Powers line with the arrival of *Galactic Guardians*, a 4-issue series which begins with a brutal attack on Mainframe's homeworld, and the Guardians Headquarters badly compromised. At the same time Asgard is besieged by Silverback luring Thor's son, Woden, into the fray. Also included is part two of "Future History"which details the impact of certain 20th century heroes on the 30th century. For part one you'll need to pick up the 48-page *Guardians of the Galaxy #50* which has a foil-embossed cover to help celebrations along and reveals the final fate of Protoge, the Bystander, Mephisto and Malevolence. There are some shocking revelations about Starhawk, Aleta returns, and Rancor returns. To fit all that in, you need the extra pages.

Moebius: Stel is a one-shot, $14.95 follow-up to Marvel's previously published *Moebius #7: The Goddess*. Stel discovers that the oligarchy isn't dead, just hiding and is subjected to some horrific mind experiments. 80 pages of outrageous SF, translated by R.J.M. Lofficier.

Roy Thomas & John Buscema join forces for the *Avengers Annual #23*, which features a long absent villain, Titon Typhon who target Hercules as part of a revenge plan against Zeus. It seems to be the month for returning...Black Panther is back in *Avengers #376*, but is it as a friend or foe?

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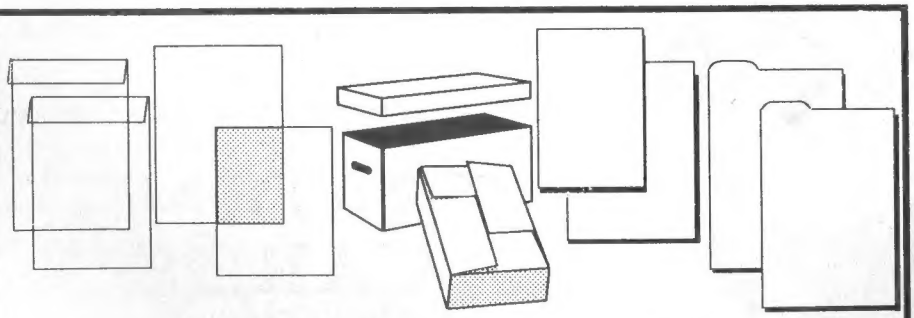

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PURR

JAMIE WOOLLEY

Asking Simon Henwood how he got into the comics field was a bit of a non-starter - *Purr*, of which he is editor, is his first project in the medium, and then it only really brushes the edges. The contents of *Purr* are much more eclectic and diverse than those you would find in a pure comics anthology. His roots do however, lie in illustration and journalism.

"I've been illustrating and writing for both adults and children for the past seven or eight years, working for a number of publishers and magazines both here and in the States, including Penguin and The New York Times. Then about two years ago, I got tired of all that and felt that I'd done as much as I could of that type of work. A friend and I had been working on a lot of things to do with film, as more of a hobby really, and to formalise that hobby we decided to set up a company, Blue Eyed Dog. We did a documentary for television in the Deep South about TV evangelists and hurricanes which was our first..."

Hang on. Evangelists and hurricanes?

"Yeah, because if you go right down the east coast, all the main headquarters of the evangelists are

QUARTERLY

INTERVIEWS SIMON HENWOOD

right in the major areas where hurricanes strike the coast, so these two factors seem to be linked. Shortly after that, we set up a record label as well, because we wanted to have a multi-media production company that did everything, but not separately. We wanted to bring together music, film and art in one product, and link these different aspects. After two years, the company is still going strong, and I felt I was ready to go back into publishing, so *Purr* was established as the publishing arm of Blue Eyed Dog."

The selling point behind *Purr* is that a curious consumer will buy it for, say, the short stories, but will then encounter comic strips or features on animation. The idea is to appeal to as wide a range of people as possible by publishing an equally wide range of subject matter, and with the contacts Simon made during the past few years, he has persuaded Stuart Gibbins (cartoonist in *Knave* and *Fiesta*), Thomas Hughes (American short story writer), Igot Goldkind, Lydia Lunch and Ted McKeever to contribute, amongst others. However, the *Purr* you see on the bookshelf is a high-quality, square-bound magazine, but it was originally intended to be a photocopied fanzine which would explore "the virtues of art produced to be photocopied", in contrast to material which was just photocopied and reproduced badly.

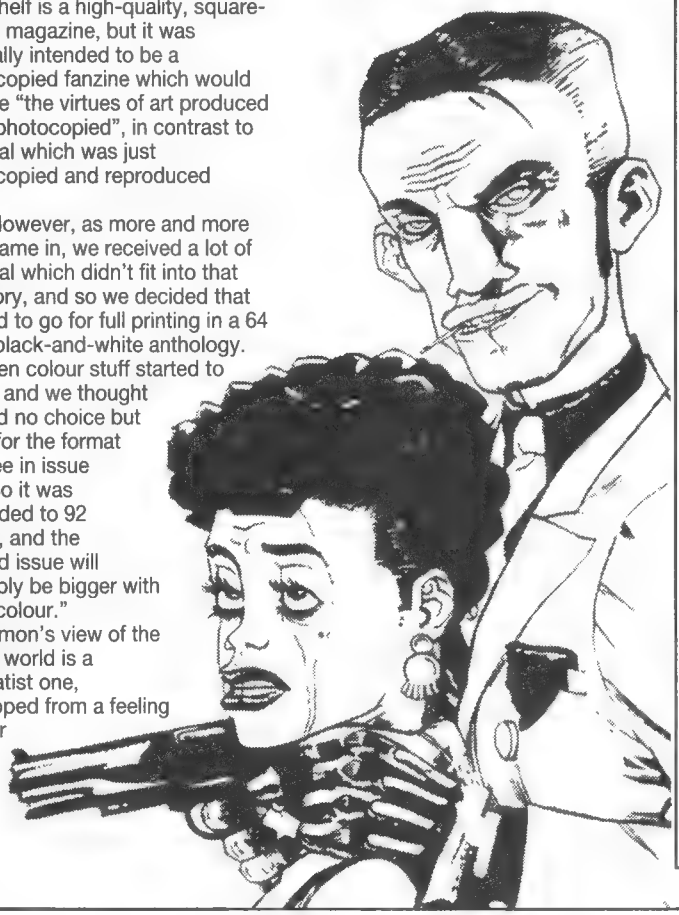
"However, as more and more stuff came in, we received a lot of material which didn't fit into that category, and so we decided that we had to go for full printing in a 64 page black-and-white anthology. But then colour stuff started to arrive, and we thought we had no choice but to go for the format you see in issue one. So it was expanded to 92 pages, and the second issue will probably be bigger with more colour."

Simon's view of the comic world is a separatist one, developed from a feeling of near contempt for the mass market fodder which he sees as the staple output of most comic companies.

"The old story is that comics have been more respected in countries like France, Italy and Europe generally, but they've had a bad name in this country because of American comics, all the superhero stuff. Some good stuff has managed to come to the surface, but it has grown like weeds through a concrete of Spiderman and the Hulk. *Purr* is an attempt to define the European style of comic as totally separate from the mainstream image. We would say that there should be a completely different shop to sell this sort of stuff, it shouldn't really be linked because it's not that comics have a bad name, it just gives people a bad idea of what the magazine is about and what we are trying to do."

Which is...?

"Well, others have tried the comic aspect before with magazines like *Blast!* and *Xpresso*, but I think we are the first to attempt to bring in music, art and film as serious components and not just as an added appendage



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like a film review. So as a result, we have musicians and film-makers writing and drawing for us. Whilst there is a lot of comic in *Purr*, it is more like a magazine as it has loads of text and graphic illustrations as opposed to straightforward strips."

Another significant aspect of *Purr* is its unique distribution system. Not coming from the comics field, distributors such as Titan and specialist shop outlets were not an obvious route for Simon, and as a result it is getting into places which other such publications have not been able to reach.

"Because Polygram distribute all our records and videos, that seemed to be the most obvious choice. The amazing thing about that is, because of *Purr*, they have been able to establish new outlets for this sort of product. The HMV chain, for instance, are taking it when they have never sold anything like it before, and places which aren't equipped to rack it are taking it as well, although for the second issue we are going to manufacture a racking system. A lot of places are taking it on firm sale as well (where shops pay upfront for the goods, as opposed to sale-or-return, when the hapless producer may get a heap of unsold copies returned a couple of months after release) which is unusual for a new product.

"The record that comes out with the first issue also helps, and that is another example of how we plan to use film makers and musicians. They cross-advertise, with the record having a blurb about the magazine and vice versa. We also have a theme for each record, the first one being 'Savage Soundtracks for Swinging Lovers", featuring specially-recorded tracks from Gretschen Hofner, Gallon Drunk, Barry Adamson and Jake Vegas, and they have also written pieces for the magazine which tie-in with their music. Future themes include "St. Valentine's Massacre', 'Acts of God' which ties in with our original evangelism film, 'Elvis Death-Day' which is my favourite and will be coming out in August around the anniversary of his death, and a spoken word one which we are planning for 1995. In addition, as well as 'Elvis Death-Day', the artist David Lyttleton is designing an Elvis boardgame where you have to get through the 70s dodging obsesity and drug-addiction, so that's another spin-off. Well, not so much a spin-off as a separate entity which we pay as much attention to, but the magazine is a catalyst."

Having read the first issue, I noticed that all the items displayed a certain morbidity, and lacked something in the way of sunshine or gaiety. It was all a bit depressing really. Was this, I wondered, a conscious decision?

"No, not really. I suppose you have to attribute it to personal taste. I think one thing you'll notice is that we've avoided the use of violence in it. It's very low-key on that aspect as I am loathe to promote any more of it because I think that superheroes have done that to death. You may find a fair bit of sex or pervision, but very little violence, and certainly no gratuitous violence. The second issue will be a bit more light-hearted, but there is no intention. The point about it is that we are presenting stuff in a way which the contributors would like to see it, which is our only editorial policy. That is why we are reprinting Ted McKeever's *Metropol* without the sound effects which Epic added and in black-and-white, which was how he intended it, and also

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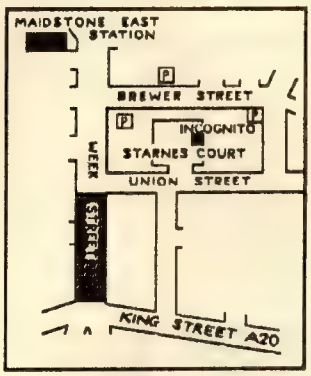

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LARGE SELECTION OF BACK ISSUES

because he is one of the few 'mainstream' artists who I consider to be interesting and original."

And *Purr* is going further. A week after its release, most shops in central London had sold out and reordered. It's been shipped to both Hong Kong and France, and it will be launched in the States in February. And it has been covered most favourably by *NME*, *Melody Maker*, The Face, *International Herald Tribune* and *Creative Review*. Each publication latches onto a different aspect: the music press highlight the records, whereas *The Face* was interested in the interview with the creator of Mr Benn, David McKee, and *Comic World*... well, I'm sure you know about that. This wide range of coverage illustrates *Purr*'s principal of introducing readers to new fields of interest.

"What our main point is, is to show that being a dilatant is not a bad thing. It's good to try different things, and with my own experience I've found that if you work in one media for too long you become stale, and if you look at different people's careers you can often see very little progression in twenty years. I can't think of anything more boring than being able to churn out the same stuff over that length of time. It's just the same as working on a conveyor belt."

★★UK NEWSBRIEF★★

FLEETWAY

The *Judge Dredd Mega-Special* should be out when you read this, with the theme of all- new characters, even Judge Dredd and Missionary Man introducing new villains. The magazine, with a Greg Staples cover and metallic ink enhancement, offers readers the chance to vote for their favourite new creation in a special telephone vote which will also give you the chance to win a subscription to the *Megazine*.

The new look *Megazine* line-up continues with Anderson, Psi, Shimura, Missionary Man and Creep. Issue 53 sees the welcome return of Mike McMahon to Judge Dredd for many years with 'Howler', written by John Wagner.

A second *Best of 2000AD* magazine will appear later this year.

MARVEL

Little news this month, with the company still in a state of flux following the announcement of a major editorial shake-up a couple of months ago. It has been confirmed that Jacqui Papp and Alan Cowsill, editors of the new look *Overkill*, have left the company, and the magazine, rapidly heading for issue 50, is currently being edited by Stuart Bartlett and David Leach. The line-up for the celebratory issue has yet to be confirmed.

The first new launch from the company will almost certainly be a *Conan* title to tie-in to the animated tv series, the first of two. You can learn more about the American relaunches in our feature later this issue, but details of the British launch are sketchy: the first launch, in June, will be aimed at a younger audience, running carefully selected material from the vast backlog available to Marvel, the second, due in the Autumn, will target an older audience.

We have it on good authority that Alan Davis' *ClanDestine* will be launched in July, with an issue zero rather than an ashcan.

SAVOY

Savoy return with another hard core mix of violence and vitriol in the shape of *Reverbstorm 1*, the latest issue of David Britton's Lord Horror sequence (the first of eight). John Coulthart provides the images you may possibly want to gloat over. Savoy sometimes have trouble with distribution, but no doubt *Reverbstorm* and the accompanying CD can be obtained by writing to them at 279 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 4EW. It's released on May 23rd, priced £3.50.

COMPAL

Comic Book Postal Auctions report that their March catalogue was their most successful yet with 369 of the 393 lots selling. The big seller was the first 305 issues of *Mickey Mouse Weekly* which sold for £2,750 as a single lot. Silver Age material again dominated the auction with *Justice League of America #1* realising £550, *Iron Man #1* realising £205, and lots of *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Fantastic Four* pulling in plenty of bids. The most sought after item was the first two issues of Jeff Smith's *Bone*: estimated at £10-15, it received 51 bids, the winner buying at £115.

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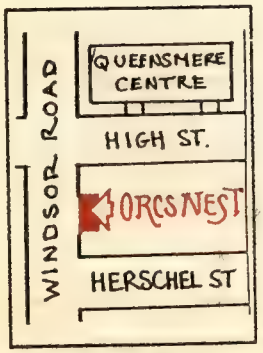

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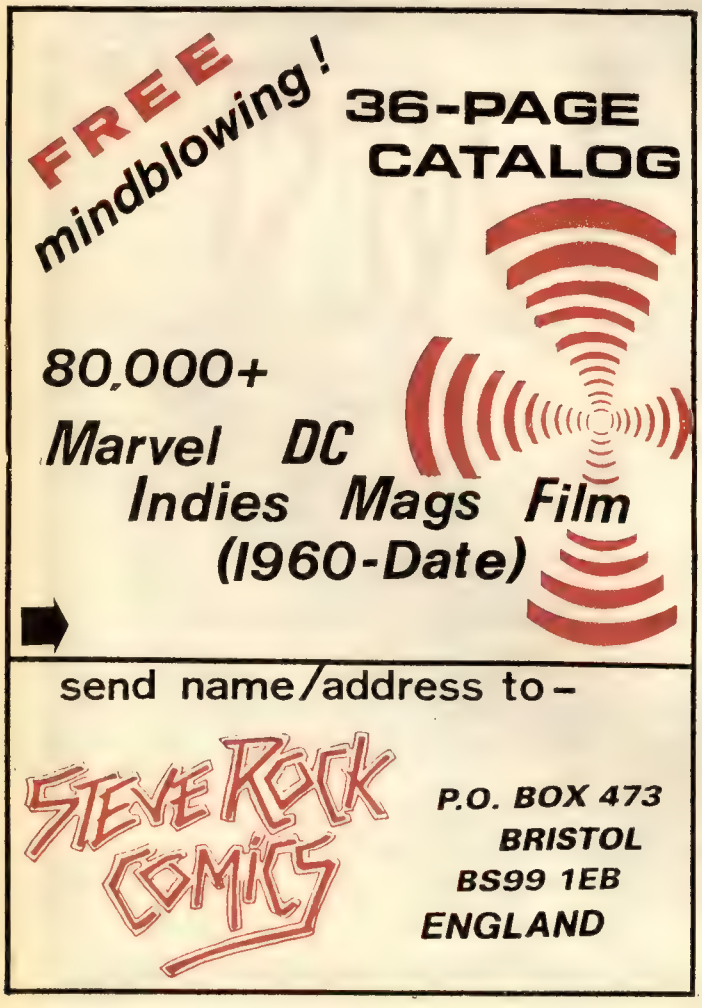

DC NEWS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

With Ira, a cynical furball in a bowler hat, and the moth-eaten cat, Frodo, he journey's amongst the planets in a poetic fable of discovery. The 12-issue series begins in September.

Goddess (8 issues) is scheduled for October, the long-awaited collaboration between Garth Ennis & Phil Winslade in which Rosie Norman explosively discovers her paranormal powers, beginning a story which involves an obsessive C.I.A. agent, a British policeman and a global chase.

Face is a 64-page one-shot by Pete Milligan & Duncan Fegredo, the first in a series of Vertigo Voice titles. The Face is the story of Andrew Sphinx, a shattered artist who wants to create a new masterpiece using his own face, with the help of a cosmetic surgeon and his wife. Only when they are trapped in Sphinx's mansion does he offer them a new deal: to perform surgery on each other.

Three more Vertigo Voices follow in 1994: **Kill Your Boyfriend** by Grant Morrison & Philip Bond is a road movie with a bookish female entranced by a psychotic delinquent who has already killed her dull boyfriend on a trip to London. It's a trip on anything can happen, even the destruction of Blackpool Tower. **Tainted** by Jamie Delano & Al Davison explores the quiet world of George, whose dark secret is so bad he's even hidden it from himself. The only clue is a vague whiff of something nasty in his otherwise spotless home. Pete Milligan, Grant Morrison & Jamie Hewlett's **Bizarre Boys** is the story of how two writers called Millison and Morrigan teamed up with an artist and wrote a story called *Bizarre Boys*. It all takes place on Bizarre Boys Day.

The Horrorist is written by Jamie Delano with art by David Lloyd, the Horrorist being an entity that provokes and raises fears that are already within us. If ever anyone was atuned to horror it is John Constantine - who stars in this 3-issue series, due the first quarter of 1995. Encounters between The Horrorist and others will appear as mini-series'.

Egypt by Peter Milligan & Sean Phillips is a 7-issue series for 1995, a dark fantasy of magic and philosophy wherein Vincent O'Shea is killed in an experiment in ritual and finds himself transported back to ancient Egypt.

Ted McKeever presents **Industrial Gothic** in 1995, a 5-issue mini-series which the imperfect are institutionalised. Two such folk, a whisky-drinking blind man and a bilateral amputee seek the Tabernacle, a place where people are not judged on their looks.

Jonah Hex will return for a second series from the same creative team as the first: Joe R. Lansdale, Timothy Truman & Sam Glanzman will tell the 5-part tale of 'Riders of the Worm and Stuff' in 1995. **Jonah Hex: Two-Gun Mojo** will become a collected trade paperback in August '94.

The *Hellblazer* team of Garth Ennis & Steve Dillon reunite for **Preacher** in 1995, a new ongoing monthly. Jesse Custer, a small town Baptist preacher declares war on heaven and hell after an encounter with the mysterious part-angel, part-devil Genesis, taking his battle across America.

In the regular monthly titles, **Animal Man** will see a powerful conclusion to Jamie Delano's run on the series, with Buddy Baker slowly devolving into a man-beast, and his apparently risen-from-the-dead daughter, Maxine, becoming the focus for cultish Life-Power Church of Maxine. Delano, we believe, will continue with the title until around issue 79 with artist Steve Pugh, after which Jerry Prosser will begin writing. DC have yet to decide on an artistic team.

Suzy, the younger **Black Orchid** (Foreman & Guay/Woch), will journey through the many strange worlds of the Nexus, where time and growth act in different accord. The adult Orchid travels to New York City and throughout the globe in search of suitable groves in which to grow new nymphs.

Issues 5-7 of **The Books of Magic** (Rieber & Amaro/Gross) tell of a corrupting organisation known as The Cold Flame, whilst the future also heralds the revelation of an ancient city below London and the return of characters from *The Children's Crusade*.

Doom Patrol (Pollack & McKeever) has recently been revamped via artist Ted McKeever, but little is revealed about future storylines; in fact, rumour has the team going into indefinite hiatus in the near future, making it the first of Vertigo's core titles to fold since the banner's inception.

John Constantine has a new creative team lined up in the shape of Eddie Campbell and Sean Phillips, their first stories due to appear in the Autumn with issue 84. Watch out for an interview with Eddie in these pages in the next couple of months. The 6-part 'Rake at the Gates of Hell' by Ennis & Dillon takes us up to that issue, a final confrontation between Constantine and the First of the Fallen.

Sandman: Mystery Theatre continues in 4-issue arcs, with 'The Scorpion', with art by Vince Locke, and 'Dr. Death' lined up for later in the year. August will see a **Sandman: Mystery Theatre Annual**, a collection of seven stories by Matt Wagner & Steven T. Seagle with art by Alex Ross, David Lloyd, John Bolton, George Pratt and others. And for all the news that is news on the **Sandman/Sandman: Mystery Theatre Special**, read the Neil Gaiman interview this issue.

Check it out also for news on the monthly **Sandman** title. Two trade paperbacks collecting **Sandman: Brief Lives** and **Sandman: Worlds'**

End

are due in '94, the former in June. Unscheduled, but due 1995, is the next **Death** mini-series, **The Time of Your Life**, and following the final issue of *Sandman*, a new ongoing monthly - **The Dreaming**.

The 6-part 'A Season in Hell' will climax in issue 50 of **Shade the Changing Man** in which Shade has to come to terms with Kathy's pregnancy and Lenny's departure. The anniversary issue will also include an 8-page pin-up gallery.

Swamp Thing is currently being revamped by Mark Millar following a collaboration with Grant Morrison. Artists Philip Hester & Kim DeMulder continue on the title as the Swamp Thing tries to escape the influence of the Parliament of Trees, travelling across Europe to Germany, building up to a confrontation in #150.

PARADOX PRESS

The 1994 version of Piranha Press, the Paradox banner will encompass new, impossible- to-catagorize titles. The Factoid Books announced for 1993 will now begin appearing in the summer of 1994 with **The Big Book of Urban Legends** by Robert Loren Fleming & Robert F. Boyd, Jr., featuring over 200 legends by various artists ranging from Rick Geary and Hunt Emerson to Trina Robins and Joe Staton. This will be followed by **The Big Book of Death** by Bronwyn Carlton (plus Robin Smith, Rebecca Guay, Steve Dillon, Phil Winslade, Richard Piers Rayner, et al), **The Big Book of Weirdos** by Carl Posey (67 stories, Mike Zeck, Batton Lash, Rick Geary, Joe Staton, etc), all for 1994, and **The Big Book of Conspiracies** by Doug Moench (50 stories, with Richard Piers Rayner, Bryan Talbot, Brett Ewins, Kevin O'Neill, et al) in 1995. All are 224-page oversized softcovers.

Paradox Mysteries are presented in 3-issue, 96-page trade paperback size, black & white stories, a series of mystery novels that range from gangland thrillers to police proceedurals. In 1994 they include:

Family Man is by Jerome (*The Magicians Wife*) Charyn and Joe Staton, presented in 3, 96-page episodes, a near-future thriller of mafia dons and assassins. Alonzo, the Family Man, stalks the Hitman who is wiping out the warlords one by one.

Neal Barratt, Jr. & Randy DuBurke present **Hunter's Heart**, about two police detectives on the trail of a serial killer who has stong political connections.

La Pacifica by Joel Rose, Amos Poe and artist Tayyar Ozkan, the hotel of the title becoming the scene of a series of brutal deaths. Investigated by the owner, Don Cooper, a pattern emerges, which involves a woman whose lovers seem to be driven to a killing frenzy.

Green Candles is for 1995, by Tom DeHaven & Robin Smith, an exploration of memory and the nightmares that can be triggered by long-forgotten images. In this case it's a woman plagued by a psychopath who sends her photographs of a candle, slowly, day-by- day, burning down.

Paradox Fiction is a companion series without the limitations of genre. **Brooklyn Dreams** is a 4-issue, 96-page series by J.M. DeMatteis & Glenn Barr following the life of Vincent Carl Santini as he recalls the pivitol events of his life. **The Project** is a 2-issue series by John Figueroa & Kirk Erienne, 12 stories set in the microcosm of a Housing Project. **Stuck Rubber Baby** is a mammoth 224-page one-shot by Howard Cruse exploring the coming of age of Toland Polk during the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s. These last two will appear in 1995.

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I hope that a good few of you readers out there picked up on Corrine's birthday last month and sent her a card. (Corrine is the Advertisement Manager of Comic World and her birthday was March 31st). We received some cards here at The Warehouse and passed them on. Maybe next year we'll do something special for her, it's 'thinking cap' time. As I keep featuring this luscious lady in my pre-ambles, one of these days I'm going to find something that will really embarrass her. Wait for it.

The Comics Warehouse stockholding is still expanding with new titles and numbers being added every week. We offer our stock split by publisher with DC and Vertigo leading the pack. There is a school of thought that an alphabetical selection of all titles irrespective of publisher is a better way of displaying the titles for sale, and is more reader friendly. I'm not sure whether that's right, what do you think? Do you like the way we set out our stall, or would you like to see changes? Let us know.

In the USA there are many monthly magazines devoted to Comic Book Prices as well as Hot Books and News and Views. The three market leaders each have their distinctive personalities and editorial slants. Wizard, the market leader, runs between 200/300 pages, is full colour with a mix of irreverent in-your-face editorial and speculative fan boy mentality. Hero Illustrated is almost as large, again in full colour, and is just as brash but in a different way. The third is Overstreet Comic Book Monthly with a colour section plus market reports, it badges itself as "the serious price guide for serious collectors". We have been offered back issues of these three magazines and have taken a test sample which we are offering you through this advertisement. They are available on a first come first served basis and once you've seen them, we'd like to know whether you want us to continue to carry this type of price guide magazine.

We recently located a few more Superman "Death" Issues, to forestall the phone calls, yes, they are first prints, as are all our books unless specifically stated otherwise. Although The Comics Warehouse carries a stock holding of over half a million books, its stock fluctuates almost on a daily basis as stock comes in and goes out, which means that our Advertisements also change from month to month as do our various packs, offers and freebies. All of our advertisements are completely self contained and cannot be mixed or matched with any other advertisements or offers. The prices in this advertisement are valid from the publication of Comics World until May 31st 1994 only. You will not be able to order anything from this advertisement after that date. All prices stated are per copy for a single copy of the book advertised except "set" prices which are for single sets as advertised. Please remember when ordering "Mature" titles such as Vertigo (the Eastman/Bisley Kitchen Sink titles are on the mature list too) we must have your honest signed statement that you are in excess of sixteen years. Thank you for the time you have taken to wander through my words, now its time to leap out of the aeroplane and free fall into the wonderful world of comic books ..... there's the green light:-

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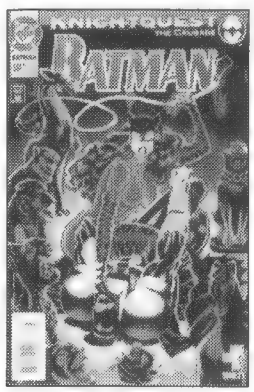

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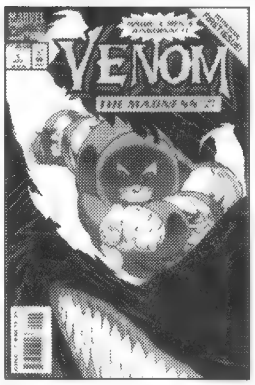

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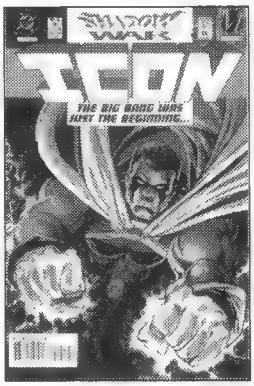

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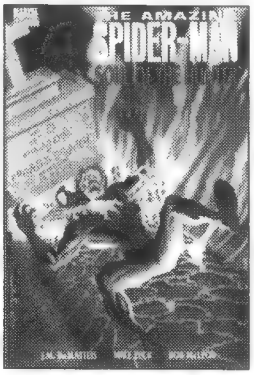

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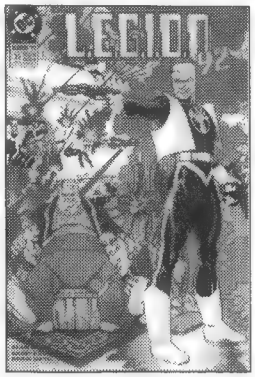

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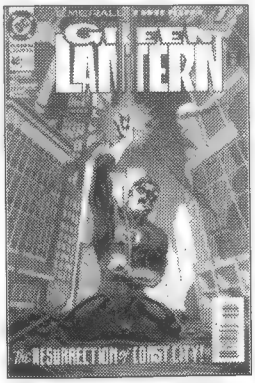

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STAR TREK

With **The Next Generation** due to end with the seventh season's two hour finale, entitled 'All Good Things' to be broadcast on April 25th in the U.S.A., and the build up already in progress for the switchover **Star Trek VII** movie which will feature both Enterprise crews, DC are also expanding their scope, with an adaptation of the final *Next Generation* episode (by Michael Jan Friedman, Jay Scott Pike & Jose Marzan Jr, shipping June 28), an adaptation of the movie (also by Friedman, due in November), and a crossover with Malibu's **Deep Space Nine** comic adaptation, which we covered a couple of months back.

Howard Weinstein returns to the regular monthly **Star Trek** series with issue #64 (due August) after a sabbatical to complete a **Trek** novel, as well as writing the **Next Generation Annual** (Michael Jan Friedman swaps regular assignments to pen the **Trek Annual**). There will be a semi-annual 64-page **Star Trek Special**, the first issue of which is penned by Peter David with art by Rod Whigham & Arne Starr, a second story written and pencilled by Mike Collins. The first issue is due in September.

Star Trek: Tests of Courage is a 160-page one-shot gathering *Star Trek #35-40* where it was called 'The Tabukan Syndrome' and reveals how Sulu left the crew of the Enterprise and became Captain of the Excelsior.

The **Star Trek: Next Generation Special** includes a Chris Claremont told sequel to his *Debt of Honour* graphic novel, plus two stories by Friedman, who also pens a 4-part mini-series, **Shadowheart** which takes a closer look at the Klingon empire, with Worf discovering that his foster brother is the mysterious raider, Shadowheart, who has designs on the Klingon High Council.

Another TV spin-off is **Viper** which will be released as a 4-part mini-series, Viper being a morphing, crime-fighting sports car. For more, see our Howard Chaykin interview this month.

MILESTONE

Four new titles will be added to the Milestone imprint later this year: **Deathwish** spins off into his own series, having first appeared in *Hardware #5*, the psychotic sent to catch another psychotic, the latter a serial killer who runs training classes for apprentice serial killers - so Deathwish thinks. The 4-issue mini-series is written by Adam Blaustein and drawn by J.H. Williams.

Holocaust gets his own 4-issue series with Ivan Velez, Jr. writing and Jorge Zaffino providing the art. The story focuses on the final, irrevocable steps that take Holocaust from being a brutal vigilante to becoming one of the most dangerous criminals in Milestone's Dakota Universe.

Ho Che Anderson is the writer/artist of **Wise Son: The White Wolf**, a 4-issue murder mystery set around Paris Island which will fill in many details about the character and his motivations.

Fade begins to literally fade away. From the pages of *Blood Syndicate*, the 4- issue mini-series will concentrate on his denial of his own homosexuality told across the story of how he travels back in time to save Tech-9, who died in *Blood Syndicate #4*. The tale is related by *Blood Syndicate* regulars Ivan Velez & Chris Cross.

All the regular titles are currently involved in the *Worlds Collide* crossover with Superman (see last issue) which culminates in a double-sized issue of **Static** (#14), due to ship July 5th.

DREDD & LOBO

The ongoing monthly **Judge Dredd** title begins shipping on June 14 with writer Andy Helfer and artist Mike Avon Oeming from *Justice League International*, the story beginning in 2045 when Eustace T. Fargo, head of the Joint Chief of Staffs, renames the Department of Justice the Department of Judgement. If you're worried about radical changes in the 17 years of known Dredd history, the series is being edited with consultation with Fleetway.

A second Dredd title, **Judge Dredd: Legends of the Law** will be a *Legends of the Dark Knight* style series of variously authored stories, the first by John Wagner & Alan Grant who will pen the first 5-issue story arc beginning in October. This first tale will feature Psi Judge Anderson.

The nearest thing to Dredd already available in the U.S.A. is probably Lobo who will be starring in a whole batch of new one-off stories as well as his own regular series. A collection of his earlier one-off titles, **Lobo: Hit Singles** gathers together *The Lobo Paramilitary Special*, *Blazing Chain of Love*, *The Lobo Convention Special* and *Portrait of a Victim* in one handy volume later this year. First off the mark in a new series is **Lobo: In the Chair** which ships in June. Alan Grant & Martin Emond see Lobo back from months of bounty hunting and in the barber's chair for a quick trim, and at the mercy of a couple of mooks he didn't pick up, the Winter Brothers. The **Lobo: Bounty Hunting for Fun and Profit** one-shot has Lobo taking a typical Joe Public fan on an educational, philosophical trip, with artists Kieron Dwyer, Kevin O'Neill, Frank Gomez, Barry Kitson and Rob McCallum showing the ropes.

Over the next couple of months expect to find guest artist Chris Halls in the pages of the monthly **Lobo** for the 'Great Postal Slaughter of 1994' before Val Semeiks returns for the three part 'Losers' storyline in #7-9.

ELSEWORLDS

We've already covered many of the DC Annuals over the last couple of months, the remainder running between June 14 through to August 9, starting with **Adventures of Superman Annual #6** wherein the world has been conquered by aliens and all superheroes have been forced into hiding; after ten years a small force led by Superman, the team including Superboy, Batman, Green Arrow and four others; The 'Super Seven' story continues in **Superboy Annual #1** (July 5); **Robin Annual #3** (June 21) is set in feudal Japan where Robin is an apprentice samurai trying to prevent an insurgent from overthrowing the local daimyo; **Deathstroke: The Terminator Annual #3** (June 28) takes place in a post-holocaust world where the ancient Deathstroke is seeking death but cannot die; **L.E.G.I.O.N. '94 Annual #5** (July 12) features a number of stories, including 'The Man from L.E.G.I.O.N. 007' and 'L.E.G.I.O.N. 90210'; **Action Comics Annual #6** is by John Byrne and features a superman of the revolution of 1776; in **Flash Annual #7** Wally West uses his super speed to become a teen idol but the lustre fades when Barry Allen is killed; **Batman: Shadow of the Bat Annual #2** has the Dark Knight as a fascist ruler of a dystopic society battling a subversive hero, Anarky; and, finally, **Green Lantern Annual #3** is set in a world where a member of the Third Reich is granted a power ring, and both Hal Jordan and Guy Gardner are Nazi heroes. Against them are a group called the Green Lanterns, their dissident leader known as Green Arrow.

Catwoman: The Last Angel is due for August, written by Eric Lustbader and drawn by Lee Moder & Scott Hanna, in this version, Catwoman becoming the heroine of the day when the Batman is possessed by an Aztec bat-god.

December will see the release of **Batman: Bloodstorm**, the long-awaited sequel to *Red Rain*, with the vampiric Batman fighting off more of the disorganised living dead - disorganised until the Joker becomes involved - as well as his own vampiric urges. Doug Moench, Kelley Jones & John Beatty reunite.

Other Elseworlds projects include **Superman: At Earth's End**, a 48-page one-shot for 1995 written by Tom Veitch and drawn by Frank Gomez, a distant, nightmarish world where Superman combats DNA engineers in Gotham, who discover the remains of the long- dead Batman in the Batcave and escape with his body.

Kal is another one-shot for 1995, written by Dave Gibbons and drawn by Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez, the escaping Kryptonian child landing in medieval England where Baron Luthor rules the land of Lexford. Kal-El becomes a blacksmith, but soon joins Loisse and Jamie and the rebelling townsfolk. **BATMAN** June will see the conclusion of **KnightsEnd** running through the pages of **Batman #510** (Jun 14), **Batman: Shadow of the Bat #30** (Jun 21), **Detective Comics #677**

SMOKE DAMAGE

***Warren Ellis,** graphics strumpet, writes **Hellstorm & 2099** stuff for Marvel, has done two issues of **Legends of the Dark Knight** at DC, written **Silencers** for Epic and is still in the middle of **The Inspector** (Vertigo) & other bits (**Mindbenders**).*

The illustration is an exclusive first look at The Inspector, by meself and the good Mark Buckingham; four issues from Vertigo, early 1995, © &™ Ellis & Buckingham 1994.

So Garth Ennis stuck a fork in my testicles and said, "What's this about you calling me Evil then, wee lad?"

But maybe I should start at the beginning. See, my name's Warren Ellis, and I write comics for money. Not the noblest profession I've heard of, but it's easier on my lower spine than working the streetcorner was. I also crank out an irregular column for a good thick fanzine called *Battleground*, in which I am invited to discuss the joys and absolute bloody horrors of this somewhat left-handed pursuit of mine. Anyway, having witnessed both these slanderous and badly confused monologues, and the pure glory of my comics writing, Steve Holland gave me a bell. Write me a column, he said. Like what, I said. Like that thing in *Battleground*, he said. Sort of the working diary of a comics writer, interspersed with pearls of wisdom and blinding wit. You can also say F*ck as much as you like. F*ck me, I said, really? Too f*cking right, he said, *and we'll pay you*. I'm in, I said, knowing that the comic I write for Marvel could be cancelled at any moment. Fine, he said. Your first deadline's in seven days, and don't forget it's the Glasgow Convention at the weekend. I looked at the calendar. It was Wednesday. I grabbed a sick friend's copy of 'Seven Tears' by the Goombay Dance Band, slapped it on the stereo, and blasted it down the phone at him on full volume. It would've croaked a lesser man, but Holland was still laughing as he shakily replaced tne receiver.

Bastard.

So what do I have to write about?

ARE YOU ALWAYS THIS SUBTLE?
WHY WASTE TIME? WE COULD BOTH BE DEAD TOMORROW.
ESPECIALLY SINCE WE'RE GOING TO NEW YORK TO CATCH A KILLER.
Y'SEE, I GOT ARMORED SO I COULD TAKE 'EM BOTH ON - HEAVEN AND HELL.
I DON'T WANT EITHER OF 'EM CONTROLLING MY PLANET.
AND I'M NOT ZARKURIM'S SERVANT. I'M JUST ME.
NOW ARE YOU GOING TO KISS ME, OR WHAT?

Not a vast amount, to be honest. The Glasgow Convention was quieter than usual. No-one humiliated themselves utterly. No-one suffered any interesting headwounds. No-one, to my knowledge, went to bed with anyone they shouldn't have (though information to the contrary should be discreetly forwarded to me through *Comic World*). There was, of course, a lot of misery. Eclipse appear to have packed up, leaving many unpaid invoices and royalties; I hear that one person is still owed around twenty *grand*. The company may not be allowed to disappear utterly, if that is their intent, because there is a good rumour stating that Miracleman/Marvelman creator Mick Anglo is firing off lawsuits in all directions contesting ownership and/or payments. God knows who rattled his cage, if indeed anyone did, but the story serves to illustrate The Good Rumour, mainstay of this industry — it's probably not true, no-one knows or cares, but it's a *good story*. Get used to this, because I get told about two dozen Good Rumours a week, and some will inevitably make their way to this page.

Anyway; who else has gone? Dark Horse International, apparently, after having finally commissioned original work from genuine talents like Woodrow Phoenix, having finally broken away from the dull grind of reprinting Dark Horse US's endless film tie-ins — shut down. At this point, no-one seems to know why. And yet, elsewhere, even the worst of the large stable of ex-Marvel UK artists are currently being kept in work by its parent company across the water. Why? An American staffer recently told me; "We need anyone who can hold a pencil."

These are Interesting Times for the creators' community. For one, the 'community' is larger than it's ever been. Companies open for business, bring in a dozen brand new talents on debut projects, and shut down within a year or two. And, all of a sudden, twelve new creators with the taste for comics are left hungry, burning up the phone lines in the hunt for work from companies who can't stretch to twelve new cheques — which is why the new guys had to go to the new companies in the first place. Some of us get lucky; I went from *Blast!* and Tundra UK/Atomeka to Marvel, DC, Epic & Vertigo. I can eat regularly, and I know where next month's rent is coming from. Goody for me. What about David Hine, Yan Shimony, Steve Tanner, Martin Chaplin and a whole host of others introduced (or, in Hine's case, introduced as a writer/artist) by these companies? Seen a whole lot by them lately? And it's still going on. What about all those Marvel UK artists? You reckon all of them will be given anything like the volume of work Marvel UK put their way? Bollocks. A

CONTINUED ON PAGE 65

DIRECT MARKET • DIRECT MARKET

He's here again – the man from Chaos City Comics.

OK - back again by popular demand! This time it's Trading Cards, just released are the Fleer X-Men cards with superb artwork (especially Glenn Fabry's Wolverine). The boxes of these were allocated to 60 per store and then cut down by another 30%. If you can get them, they're great value for money. The two boxes we opened consisted of nearly two sets and 23 chase cards which usually sell for £3-£5 each. The boxes are selling for around £45 so don't waste time – call your retailer and reserve one now! (*What are you Rich – copy writer for Saatchi & Saatchi?*)

Fantasy cards are always popular (and Boris Vallejo and Olivia ones are fab), but it can get costly for the collector especially when boxes can set you back about a third of your wages. Buying made up sets saves money but then you don't get the chase cards which can make you money – such is life!

Anyway, back to comics – Marvel seem to be hitting back for '94, we're buying in more Marvel than ever before. The Daredevil titles have sold out instantly, the X-books are better reads than I remember, and Marvel have cancelled the poor selling titles in order to better promote the stronger characters. Mind you, I was surprised with the chop of Moon Knight. It had a great talent, Steven Platt, and it was just getting interesting. So to finish, if you want a good read buy X-men, if you want to speculate buy Beavis and Butthead, but either way, look out for the big 'M' in '94.

Cheers, Richard
Chaos City – St Albans and Stevenage.

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POWER & GLORY WRITER/ARTIST HOWARD CHAYKIN TELLS IT LIKE IT IS TO PAUL H. BIRCH

If sophisticated thrillers - more often than not of a provocative nature - are your bag, the chances are you're already familiar with the likes of American Flagg!, The Shadow Returns, Blackhawk, and of course, Black Kiss. Howard Chaykin wrote and illustrated comic books that were on the edge before the phrase was invented. This coupled with his work in the film industry act as partial CV for the last 10 years or so. Chaykin's reputation as an individual was no less distinctive: he didn't suffer fools, and as far as interviewers were concerned he took no prisoners. But Holland's lined my palm with silver, and she who must be obeyed, having relieved me of it, points towards a half-decorated office where the 'phone awaits. I walk into the lion's den armed only with a week's supply of toilet tissue. I like to be prepared.

Somebody's pulling my leg, but there's a distinct lack of pain, just a sense of numbness. This can't be *The* Howard Chaykin? Sure his voice exudes an undeniable self-confidence, but he's - god forbid - mellowed. Either that or I've been set up, and for reasons as yet unknown, this is in fact not Howard Chaykin at all but some CIA approved doppelganger.

A founder member of Malibu's Bravura imprint, Chaykin's currently served up, and sold out, two issues of *Power & Glory*. His previous mini-series, *Midnight Men* published under Epic's Heavy Hitters received little publicity however.

"It kind of pissed me off!" he laughs. Yes laughs! "I'm real happy with the work I did, I thought it was pretty solid on every level. I feel it was dumped on the market and functionally ignored, plus the covers were miserably coloured. If I lived in New York, as opposed to California, I might have had more of a hands-on approach in terms of overseeing the material's production and might have improved it, but I felt I was at the mercy of people who frankly didn't do a particularly good job of selling the book, in a production or promotional capacity."

But what's past, is past he claims. "I am personally and professionally in a great place right now. I'm very happy working with the Malibu guys."

In *Power & Glory* the CIA do what Americans do best - at least in the funny books - and create a superhero called The American Powerhouse. Alan Powell is chosen for this experiment, which doesn't proceed entirely to plan, then when no-nonsense Michael Gorski is chosen to train him matters look set to get terminally worse. It's a book that, amongst other things, delights in taking potshots at the entertainment media: it's the American Dream caught with its pants down.

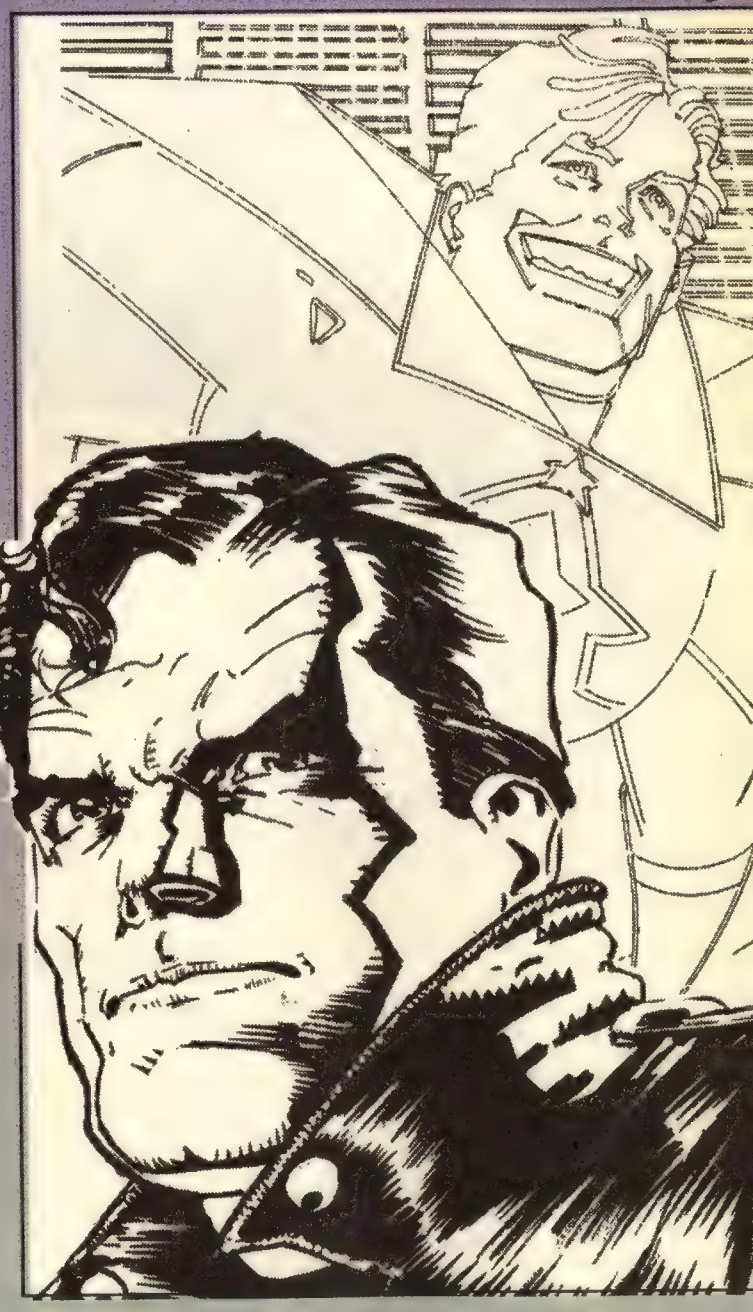
"There are no issues available that is at least one form of mandate." Chaykin says of the general reaction to the series thus far, "On a creative level - that question requires more than a simple yes or no answer - I don't know what it's like in England but there is a sense in the States that the only stuff that's serious is staff that behaves seriously. I find much more serious work in the realm of comedy. In comedy you can face a more basic human truth. I reject the idea that gravity creates enormity; I feel you can create serious work while you're getting laughs, and that's what I'm trying to do; the book has a certain satiric end to it. Frankly I think laughs are a lot harder to get than

showing the destruction of the universe or angst-ridden self-pitying guilt." Laughing he continues, "The general reaction is, 'Why can't Chaykin do more likeable heroes?'. There are any number of people who can do more likeable heroes and tell the audience how wonderful everything really is and that you can solve every problem in the world by a guy in a cape and mask. I personally believe all that 'With great power comes great responsibility,' is pure bullshit! Great power creates greater hunger! Politicians, sports stars and actors demonstrate just what power does to you. It makes people you might have had a relationship with into people you'd never eat with."

"This might sound facetious, but I try actively not to think about an audience when I'm producing material. If I did I'd be second guessing myself with every line I put in. The fact is that the audience generally speaking, has nothing to compare what they're seeing with or what their anticipations are except for what they've seen before, which is why there is so much material in television, film, and in comics that sounds, looks, feels and reads like something that has happened before. The real people you're selling to are not the readers but first your editors and producers, and then your retailers and distributors. For example when I did *American Flagg*! there was nothing like it before. Before it came out everyone was going 'What's it like? Is it Adam Strange meets Bucky Buick?' And that mentality prevails.

I TRY ACTIVELY NOT TO THINK ABOUT AN AUDIENCE WHEN I'M PRODUCING MATERIAL

"I believe fairly strongly in the political stance of the heroes in the books that I produce, because that's the mouthpiece. I can only hope that whoever's reading the book recognises the fact that I am not the voices of all these characters, and



can understand I'm trying to produce a book for a reader who has some knowledge, or awareness of the way the world really works. I'm a profoundly disappointed liberal as I'm sure you've guessed."

When #4 hits the stands it's unlikely that Powell and Gorski will end up as buddies.

"My feeling is that they represent the two opposite poles. To a great extent they're sketch comedy versions of what I perceive the contemporary hero as being: the dark angst-ridden, self-pitying whining crybaby who thinks that's what being a grown-up is about, and the grinning idiot who could pound the living shit out of you and still feel that the world owes him a living.

"In the second series they will be rejoined against their better judgement, in what will deal with the teen hero themes that are happening. Andy Warhol said everybody would be famous for 15 minutes, in that book everybody will be a superhero for 14 days. We'll be back with that in the Autumn, it will be a regular series and there will be a direct continuity.

"I am ending the first 4 issues with the characters in different places from where they were. You will notice that the characters in the second

issue begin to look a little different from what they did in the first: Vanessa gets a little sleeker and hotter: by the end of third issue Powell's haircut will look a lot more like Elvis'; also playing with the costumes. I'm having a ball, a great time!"

As I question why the characters are multi-lingual I feel at last my head's going to get chewed off, "They're not all multi-lingual!" he erupts before joking. "Vanessa's other language is typing."

"The fact is, most of the characters I chose to do this with were internationalist figures, and they're not members of the ruling class as much as servants of the secret rulers of the world, so it's required they are able to communicate with their fellow servants.

"I'm one of those people who believes that the President of the United States and the Prime Minster of Great Britain, and the various perceived rulers are actually hired to play their roles. But of course I take an enormous amount of shit when I say these things at comic book conventions, because as far as they're concerned one man can make a difference - I mean, oh sure, right!"

Something that both fascinated, and naively disappointed me on attending my first comic convention was that when looking around at the numerous creators present waxing lyrically about their stories of latterday Olympians, most of them were - and there's no tactful way of putting this - overweight.

"You know what it is?" exclaims Chaykin, "It's the comic book of Dorian Grey. Nobody has to work out or bother taking care of themselves, and nobody has to bother being moral or genuinely heroic in their day to day life because they write and draw stories about guys who are on so much more of a higher moral plane than they are that they can never hope to complete.

"Let's face it, we live in a world in which professional and amateur criminals produce stories about highly morally motivated heroes. The thing you hear in Hollywood almost all the time from executives is, 'Can't we make this character more moral? Can't we make his motivation more altruistic?' And the same applies to the physical body: I went to a cocktail party when I was 34, and I noticed all these guys who drew guys as physically perfect specimens had tits larger than most of the women they were dating! That following Monday I went to the gym and started working out. I'm also very vain, and I intend to beat off the hounds of death and hell as long as I possibly can," he laughs, adding, "And I still have all my own hair thank you very much!"

The final episode of the hour long Viper TV show for which Chaykin was Executive Editor/Script Consultant has just aired in the USA, and DC comics are putting out a comic based on the show for which he's providing covers, "I figured what the hell, it'd be fun to do since I'm pretty familiar with the characters.

"It's basically about a guy who is a high speed getaway driver who's involved in an accident. He has amnesia implanted in him and is given a completely new identity and told that he's actually a cop. When he discovers the truth he freaks out and steals the car from a corrupt police department and basically becomes like the Lone Ranger in a corrupt city. It's kind of fun, has a great looking car and it's an 8 o'clock action show! It's from the same guys who gave you *The Flash*, Danny Bilson and Paul De Meo."

A film he co-wrote with John Francis Moore for Disney after *The Flash* series "Got caught in the groundswell before Michael Jackson's scandal started and it seems to have got lost in the shuffle." On the other side of the coin there was a comic book series DC optioned called *Legend*, "That was written years ago and seems to have fallen through. I'm going to be revamping it and turning it into a film. It's a modernised version of *Gladiator*, the Phillip Wylie novel. I rewrote it, moving it up 50 years into the present making it contemporary with me but it is basically a gritty and dark humoured take on the Superman legend.

"*Power & Glory* will be out there as a movie, I'll be trying to get that set up, but at this point I'm thinking very seriously about spending the next 10 months doing nothing but comics."

I'M THINKING VERY SERIOUSLY ABOUT SPENDING THE NEXT 10 MONTHS DOING NOTHING BUT COMICS

His run producing covers for the Ultraverse's *Firearm* series has now concluded, "I've just delivered 3 covers for James Robinson's final arc, he's leaving the series." Chaykin also drew the 2 page Firearm origin that appeared as a back-up strip in *Nightman* #4?

"I was very flattered. I haven't drawn something that someone else has written in a long time. I had a real nice time doing Firearm so in all likelihood James and I will do something else together within the next year or two. I have no idea what, but I would love to do if possible - and this is something I'm thinking about right off the top of my head - perhaps a spin-off from one of the *Golden Age* arcs that didn't get finished off, maybe a late '40s crime superhero thing in a prestige one-shot? There's a number of other things we might do, I like James' work a great deal."

POWER & GLORY WILL BE OUT THERE AS A MOVIE

When I ask if it's true he's retrieved back the rights to *American Flagg!* he replies coyly, "Why, yes." the follows it with a haunting laugh that evokes thoughts of The Shadow as he reads my mind all too clearly. "Yes I am going to. I really want to do a *Flagg!* story. I've decided it will be a graphic novel, but I have no idea what it will be like! Ten years have passed and my attitudes have changed radically. I'm much healthier than when I first did *Flagg!*, I'm much more emotionally stable," his voice softens, "And I'm much more gentle."

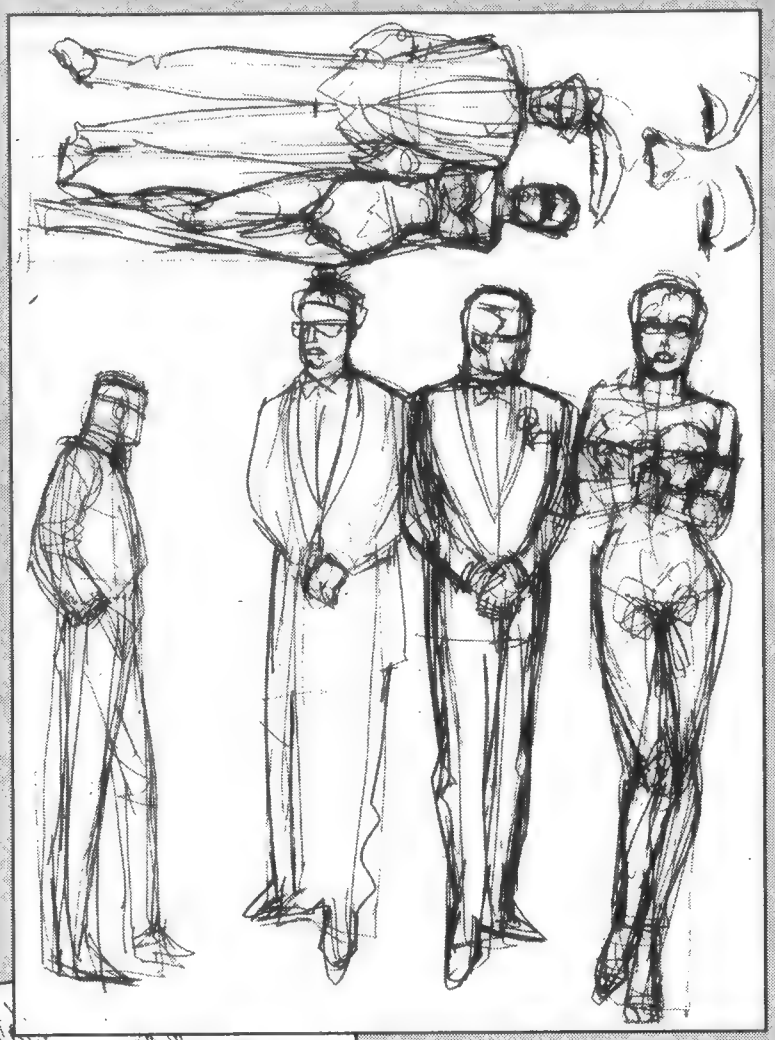
"I spent last

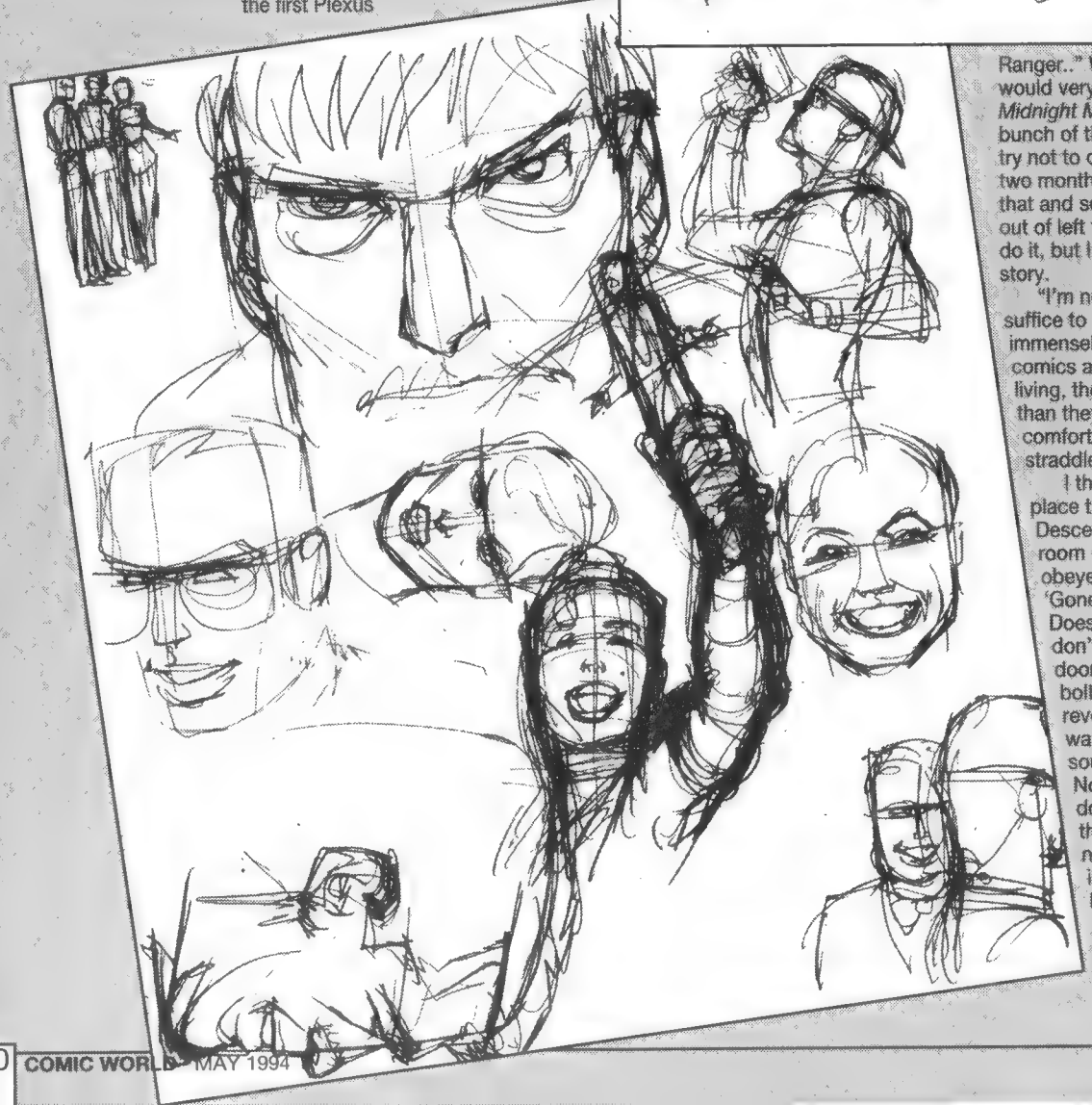
"I'M MUCH HEALTHIER THAN WHEN I FIRST DID FLAGG!, I'M MUCH MORE EMOTIONALLY STABLE. AND I'M MUCH MORE GENTLE."

weekend in Detroit at this comic convention, and the great dynamic of it was, these young kids who'd just got into comics thought I was the nicest guy they'd ever met. And I fell on the floor because I have this great reputation for being such a complete prick! I told a friend of mine, who I've known for many years and he thought it was the funniest thing he'd ever heard, he went, 'You?! What, are you kidding? You're an asshole!' So I was very amused, and very delighted, but I guess in my old age I've become a quieter, gentler individual and I recognise that I'm not that egomaniacal about this stuff."

The final and wholly predictable question then breaks out from a voice that's been talking an octave higher than usual. What else have you got planned, Howard?

"In all likelihood there'll be a *Batman Elseworlds* book that I'll be writing and drawing. I've got a kids' horror book that I very much want to do, that would be out of the ordinary for me. There's the Nick Fury/Wolverine graphic novel, The *Scorpio Connection* which will be out Autumn, drawn by Shawn McManus. I've got a couple of graphic novels sitting around at Marvel waiting to be drawn; one of them is actually being drawn by a Brit whose name I'm sorry that I've forgot. And apart from the *American Flagg!* graphic novel, I'll be bringing in elements of the Flagg! mythos into the next *Power & Glory* arc because Michael Gorski will be the first Plexus





Ranger.." What?!! "No shit!" Right, "I would very much like to do more *Midnight Men* stuff. There are a whole bunch of things that are possible but I try not to commit myself more than two months ahead, because if you do that and something interesting comes out of left field you haven't got time to do it, but I'm trying and that's the story.

"I'm not much of a suck-up, suffice to say I'm enjoying myself immensely! At this point in time, comics are a great place to make a living, they leave you alone more than they do in television but I'm comfortable and cadable enough to straddle both ends."

I thank him for his time and place the receiver down. Descending the stairs the front room is vacant. She who must be obeyed has left a note, it reads: 'Gone away for the weekend'. Does she know something I don't? I walk towards the front door fastening each and every bolt. Chaykin's final words reverberate in my head, "Stay warm and stay well!" They sounded pleasant and sincere. Now I worry. Were they double-edged? A threat? I thought I'd survived the notorious Howard Chaykin, if indeed it was him...But for how long? CW

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Something old...

THE ADVENTURES OF CONAN THE BARBARIAN EXAMINED BY ALAN THE BAR-ER WOOLLCOMBE

Question: who is the longest established mortal character in the Marvel Universe? Spider-Man? Namor the Sub-Mariner? Captain America? Not even close: both in fiction (the antediluvian Hyborian Age) and fact (the pre-superheroic 1930s) Conan the Cimmerian outranks such pretenders, not to mention such other johnny-come-latelies as Superman and Batman. Since his creation in 1932 by pulp writer Robert E Howard, Conan (pronounced COH-NAN) has maintained a loyal following, sufficient to persuade Marvel in 1970 to acquire the licence for a comics adaptation called, naturally enough, Conan the Barbarian. Last year saw the comic reach issue 275 - and the end of its run. So why are we devoting precious space to him now? you might well ask.

The man responsible for this apparent downturn in Conan's fortunes is Richard Ashford, founder of Acme Press and the late-lamented *Speakeasy* (the 1980s equivalent of *Comic World*) and currently the Marvel editor in charge of all the Conan titles. How did a lad from south east London come to control the fortunes of the world's foremost barbarian? Take it away, Richard: "I started Speakeasy when I was at college in 1979. From there, I developed it into a fairly popular trade press fanzine and managed to launch a number of other titles, including James Bond, the TV Avengers [*Steed and Mrs Peel*] and *Maxwell the magic cat* [by Alan Moore]. I also started a comic shop in Brixton. I sold out in 1990 and moved to New York, where I contacted Tom DeFalco and Dick Giordano to see if I could get any work in the editorial departments [at Marvel and DC, respectively]. Luckily enough Marvel came up with an offer I couldn't refuse - namely, work - and I started there in March 1991 as an assistant editor." The rest is hyborean history, as they say.

Conan himself, however, while not on his way out, was not going anywhere: a steady, if unspectacular, seller, Ashford was faced with the problem of stimulating interest in a declining market. "Conan has taken a hit over the last couple of years. However Conan has a very strong core market and a very wide appeal: it is probably one of the better-selling newsstand books that Marvel does, apart from obviously the X-Men and Spider-Man." Despite this, publicity has not often gone the Cimmerian's way, with even his 60th anniversary in December 1992 only being marked by - *be still, my beating heart!* - an *essay* in the back of one of the magazines by perennial Conan chronicler, Roy Thomas. Such restraint would be charming, were it not so typical of the problems Ashford faces. The solution was as simple as it was drastic: kill off the original title and relaunch it with a special cover. Thus we bade adieu to *Conan the Barbarian* and bid hello to *Conan the Adventurer*. "We're back to Conan the young adventurer," explains Ashford. "The first issue starts with the Battle of Venarium, Conan's first battle, when he's only about 15. We then pick up the second issue with Conan as he travels south to go round the world. I don't want to worry new readers with anything detailed in terms of continuity: it's there for the old readers if they want to look back at the old issues, but for a new reader there is everything they want right from the first page." What continuity there is is maintained by the ubiquitous Roy Thomas, with art from relative newcomer Rafael Kayanan: "Rafael is pencilling and inking twelve out of the first fifteen issues, with the other three to be done by John Watkiss. Rafael's take on the book is so unique as to make it totally fresh and different."

...SOMETHING OLD...

Well, no it isn't, actually: fresh as Kayanan's artwork may be to newer readers, it reminds me irresistibly of the original Conan artist, the legendary Barry Windsor-Smith. And look! By some happy happenstance, Marvel are simultaneously just starting to reprint those memorable early issues of *Conan the Barbarian* by the magnificent Mr Smith: "We're reprinting *Conan the Barbarian* from issue one as *Conan Classic*. There won't be new [material] in terms of strip but we are going to be printing three pages of Barry's that were dropped from issue one and had only been printed in a Marvel fanzine. There will be text pieces: Roy is doing pieces to put everything in continuity and tell people how it all happened."

Roy Thomas also covers Conan's chronology in the other Conan reprint title, the black and white *Conan Saga*: "We're running regular essays by Roy, where he updates the whole of Conan's life, based on the comics. We're also moving into running the Conan stories themselves chronologically, which means that we'll be putting in non-Thomas stories if they happen to occur in Conan's life at that particular point." And as if that isn't enough for the more obsessive barbarophiles, the actual ongoing continuity from *Conan the Barbarian*, along with the same creative team (writer Thomas, penciller Mike Docherty and inker E.R.Cruz), has been

d...

carried over into the back of the Cimmerian's fourth regular title, *Savage Sword of Conan*.

With four monthly publications devoted to the exploits of the Cimmerian, each title has a clearly defined role: where *Conan the Adventurer* is effectively Conan the Boy Wonder and *Conan Saga* and *Conan Classics* the monochrome and colour reprints, the black and white *Savage Sword* has for a long time been a kind of hyperborean Tales of the Dark Knight, with a rotating cast of artists (coming soon: former Marvel UK regulars Simon Coleby and Andrew Currie) tackling tales from any period in Conan's career. "Basically, the idea has been to give people leeway with whatever length single-issue stories they can manage and feel comfortable with, along with the back-up feature."

Of all the names associated with Conan in comics, the one who has stuck with the character the longest after Roy Thomas has been master artist John Buscema. Now, after a break of barely two years, he is back illustrating his adventures in *Savage Sword*, but this time he is embellishing his own pencils. "What John wants to do is to pencil and ink, and I don't think anybody inks John better than John. His official return to Conan is in issue 225, which is a prequel to 'Red Nails' (the most popular Conan story ever done and the most reprinted) - we already did the sequel with Rafael Kayanan, so that will be interesting to see."

Issue 225 may mark Buscema's 'official' return, but 222 (the April issue) sees his redrawn version of *Conan the Barbarian* #1, written by (need you ask?) Thomas. "John was meant to be the original artist on *Conan the Barbarian* but his page rate was too expensive for a project that they weren't too sure would sell - it was basically a budget thing. So now John is pencilling and inking a *What If John Had Drawn Conan The Barbarian*?-type thing."

PICK AND MIX

But the best is yet to come: not one but two graphic novels, one illustrated by Simon Bisley, are on the cards. "We are going to do an adaptation of an original Robert E Howard tale, *Rogues in the House*. Simon has been really keen on Conan for a long time, but in the past nobody ever seemed to get around to organising it. When I took over editing the book, I contacted him. He is going to be doing it in black and white and then we might get one of those computer people to do really nice colouring. Larry Hama is going to write it - he used to edit Conan but has never written it - there's a lot of chemistry there." Quite when this 44-page treasure will see the light of day is another matter. Ashford is similarly noncommittal when it comes to another mooted, and as-yet-unnamed, graphic novel by Thomas and Mike Docherty. "It's about Conan and Bàlit, set at some point where she goes to the South Pole with Conan and they fight penguins... It's nice to have projects that you can just pick at."

That has the air of a concluding remark, but there is one final question which Richard Ashford asks and answers unprompted. "Why did I choose Conan? Because as a fan I had bought it right from when it first came out - there was so much there that I read at the time and thoroughly enjoyed. I have that fan connection and I feel that is really important: if you have got that, you can bring a lot to what you're working on." Pause. "Besides, you should have seen the other titles I was offered..."

And his impossibly straight face cracks wide open. CW

omething New

PULL FIGURE

Sandman, Death © DC Comics

So I phoned Neil up and said, "You've just whitewashed everybody in the Awards. Best Writer, Sandman won the Best Ongoing Series, Death won the Best Limited Series...and everyone involved in it won their respective categories...

"The only thing you didn't get a vote in was Best New Writer."

"I'll live," came the faraway reply after a few seconds wait that I put down to Transatlantic time delay, but really its because Neil was still trying to pull on his socks before getting too deeply into conversation again. "Have you been ringing and ringing?" he asks, "because the phone hasn't been on the hook for longer than 90 seconds all morning, and there was eleven pages on the fax as well when I got up."

Most creators are chatty conversationalists when you get them on the phone, probably because so much of their work is done in isolation, but I'm convinced that there are days when all writers and artists offer up a small prayer of gratitude to the man who invented the telephone answering machine, or no work would ever get done, and Neil would spend much of his life without socks on. I was going to call this interview 'Barefoot in the Head', but I thought I'd have to spend too long explaining why.

So let me step aside and leave you and Neil to get on with it.

"Reaction to *The Children's Crusade* was, generally speaking, kind of like mine. Everybody loved number one but number two was, I think, what could charitably be described as a learning experience. We've learned a number of things...what I've basically learned is that the next time somebody mentions crossovers I'm going to..." (there's a sound like claws sliding down a blackboard with an undercurrent of cornered dog growling) "and if I ever express any interest in doing a crossover to anyone, my wife has instructions to shoot me.

"I dunno. It was interesting because we were trying to do an in-continuity crossover with a bunch of people who generally aren't interested in crossovers. I'm sure we could have made it work, but to make it work you need the iron hand that, say, Mike Carlin uses to run the Superman titles. Everyone needs to be told, y'know: 'You vill cover plot points A und B in your story, und Heinrich vill do zis'*

"That wasn't how we did it. It was more about talking over the general thrust of how we wanted the story to go and taking it on trust that everyone would somehow do their bit. Some of it worked and some of it didn't. I'm still very proud of what me, Chris (Bachalo) and Bucky (Mark Buckingham) did on the first one, and I like the characters - the two kid detectives. They were a lot of fun to do, and at some point I think I'll go back to them when I don't have anything else to do - he said, ham, ham - and do some more mondo Jennings & Darbishire stuff, but not in the context of any crossover.

"At the end of the day there were just too many characters running around at the end of issue two, just so much stuff to try and get out of the way that we had assumed people would have done things with earlier on. I don't know. I definitely wasn't happy with it, but I don't think that was the fault of any of the people working on it. I think it was the Nature Of The Beast. It's like, you can have a well disciplined orchestra that practise a lot, or you can have a bunch of undisciplined rock 'n' rollers, but it's a mistake to get thirty or forty of them up on stage at the same time and expect them to sound like the orchestra.

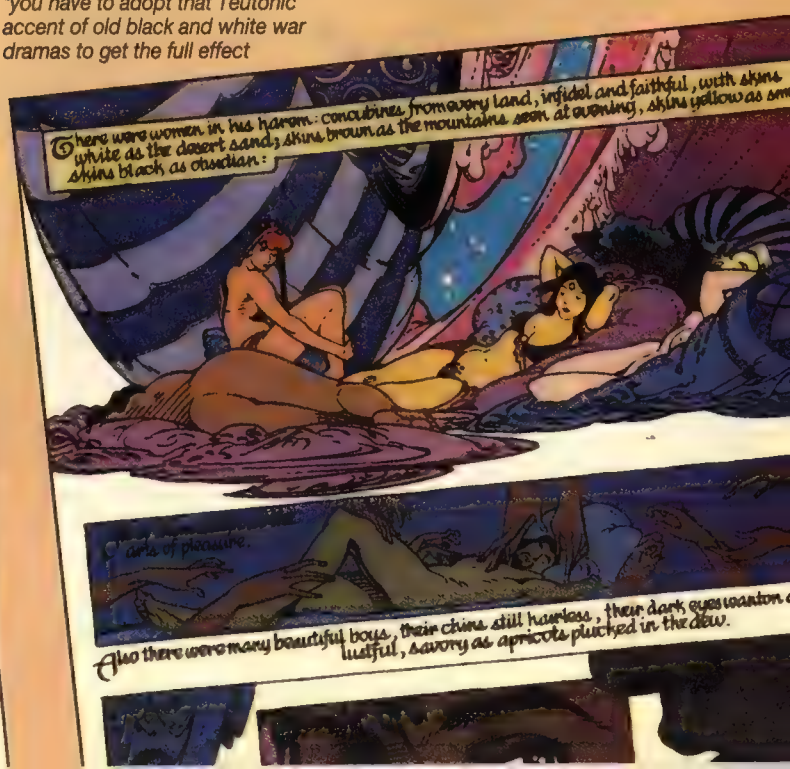
"On a crass, commercial level it served its function of getting some people to try out titles they hadn't tried before. I think it worked very well for the upcoming *Books of Magic* comic. The Timothy Hunter story that John Ney Rieber in the *Arcana Annual* was one of the ones I genuinely liked. I think they all had nice bits in them: *Animal Man* had some lovely bits, *Black Orchid*...I liked *Black Orchid*. I thought that had some really nice bits in it.

"But, as I say, if we were to do it again you would have to say "Jamie, you man the torpedoes, this is what you have to do and get across', like they do with Superman."

'you have to adopt that Teutonic accent of old black and white war dramas to get the full effect

DEATH IN THE HOUSE

LOOK AT MY CITY, DREAM LORD!
IT IS A CITY OF MARVELS, OF WONDERS. THESE ARE THE DOMS OF WONDERS.
IT IS MY CITY!
I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR IT--
AH! THE SOUVENIR.
DISCARDING O YOU NO CARPET


There were women in his harem: concubines from every land, infidel and faithful, with skins white as the desert sand, skins brown as the mountains seen at evening, skins yellow as sm
skins black as obsidian:
Also there were many beautiful boys, their chins still hairless, their dark eyes wanton
lustful, savory as apricots plucked in the dew.

Pulp fiction

PULP FICTION FOR ONCE, A MAN WHO NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, NEIL GAIMAN

THAT'S $19.95 FOR THE BRACELET, THE EARRINGS AND THE KEY-CHAIN. LET'S TAKE A CALL..
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THIS IS BERNICE IN FLORIDA. I WAS GOING TO BED, BUT THEN I SAW THE LOVELY JEWELRY.
AND ARE YOU A REGULAR HOME SHOPPING VIEWER, BERNICE?
UH-HUH.
AND HOW MANY OF THESE BEAUTIFUL BRACELET SETS ARE YOU BUYING?
KNOCK KNOCK
TWO, ONE FOR ME, AND ONE FOR MY MOTHER-IN-LAW.
YOU KNOW THESE ARE REAL ZIRCONS, BERNICE?
YOU GOT ANY TEA? PROPER TEA, NONE OF THAT HERBAL RACKET
WHAT ARE YOU? CRAZY OR SOMETHING?
MAD AS A PORRIDGE-KNIFE. YOU CAN CHILL ME METTLE, LOVEY. GOT ANY TEA?
PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS
HUH?
I MEAN, WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT?
I DON'T KNOW. I MEAN, WHAT KIND OF A QUESTION IS THAT? WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT? I SUPPOSE I'M THINKING ABOUT WHAT I'M DOING HERE. WHETHER IT'LL EVER GET OUT.
WHY DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DEATH?
WHAT?
I MEAN, IT'S NOT THE KIND OF THING MOST PEOPLE THINK. I DON'T GET UP IN THE MORNING AND GO, "GEE, I'M THE SPIRIT OF FIRE," OR THE EASTER BUNNY, OR SOMETHING. WHY DO YOU?
NO, YOU'RE NOT. YOU'RE A GIRL CALLED DIDI, AND YOUR FAMILY WAS KILLED A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO.
WELL... THAT'S TRUE TOO.
HOW CAN IT BE?
I... I DON'T KNOW I
STRANGE. I AM
I UNDERSTOOD IT ALL THIS AFTERNOON. IT WAS ALL FRESH AND CLEAR, AND EVERYTHING WAS... EASY. IT'S SORT OF MURKIER NOW.
BUT I AM DEATH. IT'S...
LISTEN
"ONE DAY IN EVERY CENTURY DEATH TAKES ON MORTAL FLESH, BETTER TO COMPREHEND WHAT THE LIVES SHE TAKES MUST FEEL LIKE, TO TASTE THE BITTER TANG OF MORTALITY
AND THIS IS THE PRICE SHE MUST PAY FOR BEING THE DIVIDER OF THE LIVING FROM ALL THAT HAS GONE BEFORE, ALL THAT MUST COME AFTER."
HAVEN'T YOU HEARD THAT BEFORE?
NO. WHAT'S IT FROM?
I... I DON'T KNOW

Let's leave all the submarine imagery behind...mind you, I was tempted to call this interview 'The Undersea World of Neil Gaiman', but in the end I thought I'd have to spend too long explaining why. Instead let's ask the nuts and bolts question: why have the Endless, and Death in particular, struck such a chord with fans, leaving aside the highly crafted writing and artwork on *Sandman* and last year's *Death* mini- series. What's made so many thousands of fans take these characters to their hearts?

"In Death's case I think it's because she's nice," says Neil, and adds after a pause, "I can't think of any other nice characters in comics.

"Comics is not a medium filled with nice characters - it's filled with angst and grinding teeth and she...she's *nice* and you would want to spend time with her. She's funny and she's interesting, and that tends to strike a chord. Plus the growing conviction in the right minds of most readers that, if they're lucky, it'll be her they meet one day. That helps.

"In the case of Sandman I don't know. I can never tell to what extent it's him and to what extent it's what is now a nightmarishly huge supporting cast. Writing 'The Kindly Ones' I keep finding characters I thought long-buried in old storylines turning up again. I'm trying to be as economical as possible and not hire anyone new for the cast right now because there are just so many old characters. I wrote a scene last night with a bunch of people we haven't seen since 'The Dolls House', and we get to find out what's happened to them in the last four years.

"But I think the Sandman is a wonderful character: he's gloomy, he's brooding, he's Byronic, he's very brilliant, and he has a very precise sense of right and wrong. It's not necessarily exactly in accord with our own, but he does try to do what is right and not do what is wrong, unless he's being selfish. He's complex and contradictory and one of the things I've enjoyed over the years about writing him is moving in and out: sometimes I'll write stories that are pretty much from his point of view and you know exactly where he stands and exactly what's going on in his head, and in some stories he's just a distant, brooding figure of almost limitless power. There's a strange sense of parallax you get: the feeling that both things are true. The one you see when you're inside his head is a lot more interesting, but a lot less impressive than the brooding, incredibly important figure who is heir to all these secrets."

I'm so close to calling this piece 'The Parallax View'. There's that strength in the whole series that at times you know Morpheus so well you can understand the shape of the nightmares he creates and taste the air of the Dreaming in the back of your throat, and at other times your a voyeur, spying from the sidelines, watching how other characters react - and there are so many different *characters* in *Sandman*. But I'd end up having to explain all that just to explain the title. It's the subtle shifting of viewpoints.

"That's part of the fun and part of the joy for me," Neil continues. "I love having Mervyn there - Merv Pumpkinhead - because every now and then Merv is the little voice in the back of my head that says 'Oh, God. He's not going to start brooding again. Look at him mooning - moon, moon, moon - over some bint.' There are little Mervyn thoughts that come up and it's lovely to have Mervyn there just to express them. His basic theory is that the Sandman should get a life, but he'd never dare actually say it.

"Then you have Lucian, who has a much better idea of what the Sandman is, and Matthew, who, again, has been there for 4 or 5 years...and that's another strange thing about all this: the reactions of some of these characters to the Sandman has changed over the years. They've watched *him* change over the years and it's very odd, for me, bringing back these characters that I haven't written for years. Like Rose Walker. I haven't written Rose Walker since 1989. The last time I wrote Rose I had this huge argument with Karen (Berger, editor) which I kept losing, which was about whether or not I could use the word fuck. Rose was the only character in *Sandman* who continually used the word in conversation. When I wrote Rose Walker dialogue I had to go through it and take all the fucks out...actually what I tended to do back then was write all the fucks in and when it came back lettered all the fucks would have mysteriously vanished. But Vertigo has changed

over the years as well - now I'm getting the lettered stuff back from Todd (Klein) and all the fucks are still there.

"But do I know the reason for the Sandman's popularity? No. I created the kind of character who I very much wanted to read. That was pretty much how it worked, and I think that a lot more people have the same tastes as I do than I originally thought. It's something I get to say in too many interviews now when people ask 'Did you think it would be that popular?' No, I never thought it would be *that* popular. I *hoped* it was going to be a minor critical success, but I *thought* that it was going to get cancelled before the end of the first year.

"Everything seems to be fine now. People still like us, and we're consistently the best-selling mature readers comic in...in *history*. We've been going for five years no and slowly, bit by bit, put on more sales. We're now doing over 100,000 a month, which is nice, and if there's any drawback its that there are probably a lot of people out there that would like *Sandman* but they won't pick it up because they know its kind of popular. I don't blame them for it because that's kind of the way I'm built too: you sort of think that if everybody likes it, it can't be all that good. Do you do that? I do it with music, and with authors - I was always pleased that I discovered Stephen King before he was S*T*E*P*H*E*N K*I*N*G, back when he was just an author on a shelf because if I hadn't I don't think I would have read him. He sells too many copies, he's too popular, so *obviously* I wouldn't like him.

"You get the same thing with music. It's great when it's only you, but by the time it hits MTV...all of a sudden this terrific little band you really like, you switch on *Top of the Pops* and there they are..." and the little dynamo of interest in your head starts to wind down, which I'm OK about admitting to. It's a nice feeling that your favourite writers are writing just for you, or the band on stage is putting all its energy into a track because *you* are there. But how the hell can I get 'Selfish' into the title?

NEVERENDING STORIES

The Endless are coming to an... "End," Neil says. It won't take an infinite number of monkeys to dream up the headline when that very last number is finally decided.

" 'The Kindly Ones' is taking an awful lot longer to do than I thought it was going to. I thought 'The Kindly Ones' was going to be six issues, and I'm doing chapter five and really we're just at the end of Act One, or the beginning of Act Two. Partly that's because I want to try and wrap up all the loose ends that I've left in *Sandman*, and I have five years worth. There were more than I remembered, so my guess now is that 'The Kindly Ones' will take at least twelve issues; after that there's a story with Michael Zulli called 'The Wake' - which you can take any way you like - and then a short story or two maybe, and then the very last *Sandman* which will be Charles Vess' 'The Tempest'.

"I originally figured in 1989 that if *Sandman* wasn't cancelled it would

DO I KNOW THE REASON FOR THE SANDMAN'S POPULARITY? NO

probably end about issue 40. The shape of the big story hasn't changed in those four or five years, it's just that everything has taken longer than I thought it would."

Which is fine when you have strength in both storyline and characters. And you can't just *say* what's happened to these people because you've got to say what it *means* to them and how it *affects* them. The action of events is only half of the story in *Sandman* - it's reaction that adds the third dimension.

"Right now the trouble is just shutting them up! Some of these characters haven't had a single thing to say for four years and are just delighted to be back. And I suspect that some of those characters who we don't get to wrap up here will be back. Hazel and Foxglove, who I thought might wrap up in *Sandman* I'm probably going to have to put in the next *Death* series because-- I know what's going to happen to them and I would quite like to do those stories."

Like bumping into old friends, when everything just bubbles out?

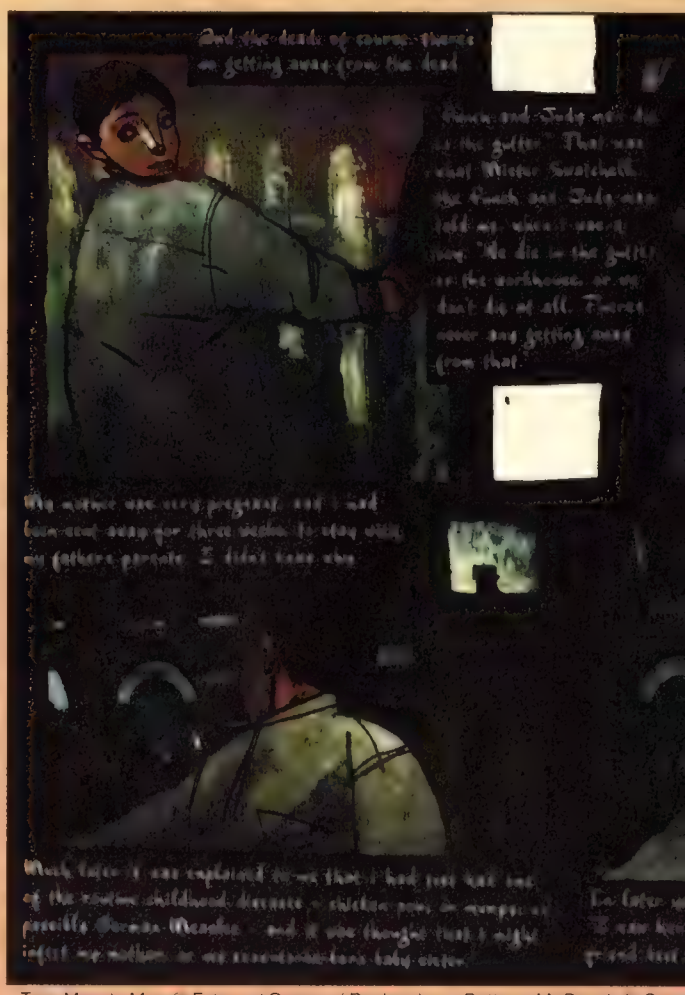
"It really is. Rose Walker was the one I really felt that with because I hadn't written her since 'The Dolls House'. She's learned stuff and she's grown up a bit, but she's still very much the same Rose, and it's lovely having her back."

NEVER ENDED STORIES

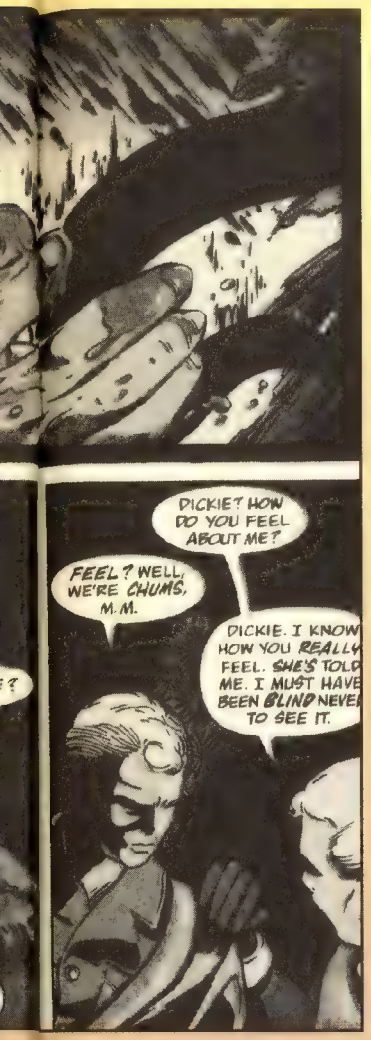
We switch conversation mid-stream. Whilst *Sandman* is being allowed to reach a logical conclusion, two of Neil's tales have had their lives abruptly shortened: Sweeney Todd and Miracleman. With Tundra gone and Eclipse seemingly vanished, was there any chance for them to ever see the light of day?

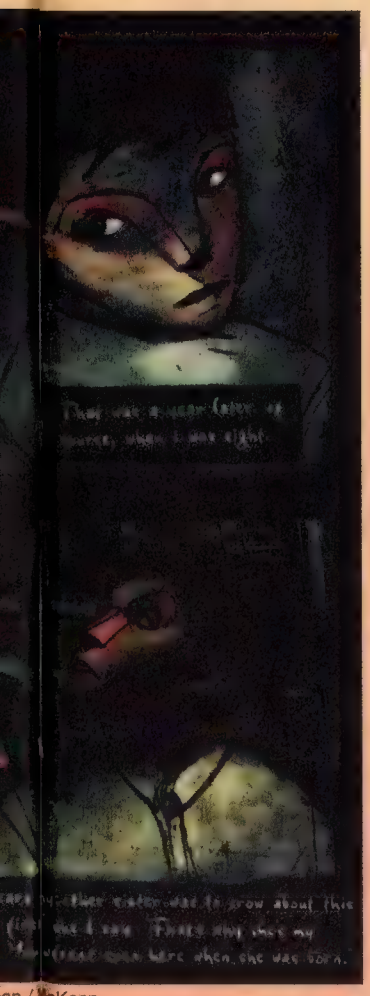
"Well, in both cases there are problems with the publishers. In the case of Tundra and Spiderbaby, *Taboo* went to the great publishing house in

DICKIE ?
YES
MIRACLEWOMAN AND I HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT YOU.
YES?
WELL, SHE FEELS THAT THERE ARE SOME THINGS WE SHOULD SETTLE BETWEEN US.
SETTLE
WHAT DO WE HAVE TO SETTLE, M.M.? I MEAN I'M BACK FROM THE DEAD, YOU'RE RULING THE WORLD, EVERYTHING'S



Top: Miracle Man © Eclipse / Gaiman / Buckingham. Bottom: Mr Punch © Gaim

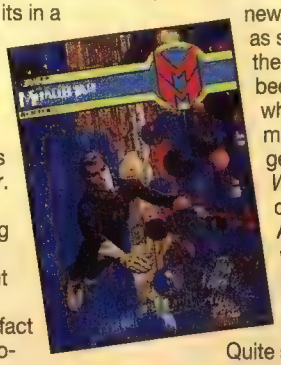

DICKIE? HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT ME?
FEEL? WELL, WE'RE CHUMS, M.M.
DICKIE. I KNOW HOW YOU REALLY FEEL. SHE'S TOLD ME. I MUST HAVE BEEN BLIND NEVER TO SEE IT.



an / McKean

the sky. In the case of Eclipse they're sinking slowly into the--" I *think* he was going to say east.

"*Miracleman #25* has been finished for months and months and months and months and *(that's enough months)*...It was written a year and a half ago, Mark drew it, it was lettered, but as far as I know its in a drawer somewhere and Eclipse have never sent it out to be coloured.



"I think it's fair to say that Eclipse is now an ex-publisher. Most of the people have gone. I'm trying to untangle things with *Miracleman*, but thing's are complicated by the fact that Eclipse own two-thirds of it and me and Bucky own a third; it's all further complicated by the fairly murky publishing history of Miracleman. As I say, there's one issue finished - the one where you get to see what happens to Dicky Dauntless after he threw that last punch and what he did the following day. You get to meet Mister Master, the very first enhanced human in the Miracleman world, who now has a long white beard and lives at the top of a mountain, inspired chiefly by the old cartoons."

Or, more likely, you *won't* get to meet him, "because if Eclipse go into bankruptcy...I don't know who owns Miracleman now, let alone who may eventually own it.

"Sweeney is simpler because it's mine and Michaels. What will happen is that we'll go out and get ourselves a new publisher for it, which we'll do as soon as me and Michael have the time to work on it. Michael's been doing a few projects recently which have been much more mainstream, which have been getting his name out, viz: *Witchcraft*, the Vertigo book he's done with James Robinson and Alisa Kwitney, and he's currently working on the Alice Cooper book that I'm doing for Marvel for which he's doing the most beautiful stuff he's ever done. Quite stunning.

"That's interesting because Marvel are licensing the rights to do the comic from me and Alice, so it's not work-for-hire and Marvel are not the bosses - me and Alice Cooper are the bosses. So if the writer, Neil Gaiman, happens to think that he's being mistreated, he can complain to his very, very good friend, Neil Gaiman, the licenser.

"But I think that once the Alice Cooper project is over we will seriously start looking around for another publisher for Sweeney. But in finding another publisher we face the same problems that were so beautifully solved by *Taboo*, which is that we wanted to do different chapters of different lengths, and there's not a publisher in the world who can afford to subsidise a somewhere between 200 and 500 page project and wait for it to be finished before bringing it out. So it needs to come out on the instalment plan just to subsidise itself.

"Sad but true economics. I would much rather go off and do the whole project and bring it out when its finished. I'd be OK, but Michael would starve, and a starving Michael is not a happy Michael."

Another story that seemed to be at risk of never appearing was the graphic novel, *Mr. Punch*, his latest collaboration with Dave McKean for Victor Gollancz, but Neil insists that not only is it finished and due to come out in October, but that it's "the best thing me and Dave have ever done."

PULP AND TRADITION

"Oddly enough," Neil begins when I mention another of his projects, "the phonecall before the phonecall before yours was from Matt Wagner," Matt, of course, being the writer of the Golden Age Sandman in *Sandman: Mystery Theatre* - a natural for a crossover with Neil's Sandman you may think. Well,

Continued on Page 54

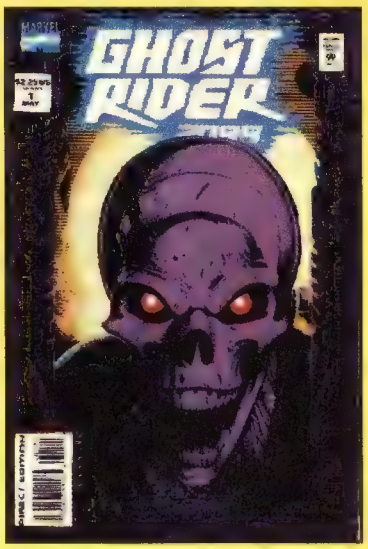
THE BOYS FROM THE DEATH STUFF

CHRIS BACHALO

My phone call catches Chris at work. "I'm so glad to hear it," he responds in surprise as my congratulations filter across the Atlantic Rift. "Its made my day."

That could be a bit of overstatement, but I do think he's honestly pleased to have his work recognised. Having built up a remarkable C.V. over the past couple of years, I seriously hope he's going to be reaping some of the rewards. We interviewed Chris at length last month - before we knew he was going to top the poll - and since then there have been a number of changes to his schedule, the biggest being his departure from *Ghost Rider 2099*; the frustrating thing about being a good artist is that you get asked to do a lot of things, and there simply isn't the time to do them all.

"I just couldn't put what I wanted into it. I just couldn't maintain that pace." he says. "It was getting to a point where I thought the quality was going to start suffering and I didn't think it was fair to the book. I talked it over with Evan Skolnick, the editor, and he appreciated what I'd put into the book, and we parted on good terms. I was really apprehensive about doing it - it looks really bad that I jump on for only three issues and leave. I know a lot of readers gripe about how creators come and go, and I never want to become part of that: it was really hard to leave, and something that I thought about for a long time, but there was no way I could keep it up."



Chris was apprehensive about taking on the work in the first place, having turned down the title: "Evan eventually talked me into doing breakdowns, and what's really frustrating about it is that as the book was going along it was getting better and better - the third issue was better than the second which was better than the first. We'd really started to get into it, and the writer (Len Kaminsky) was getting into the storyline. It was very unfortunate. Jumping onto projects and then leaving is something I don't want to be associated with. It's very unprofessional, and I left with deep regret and gave them all the apologies I could.

"I'm going to devote all my time to *Generation-X* so that in the Fall I'll have time to do the new *Death* series. These are the two projects that are going to be taking up the next year. Doing *Ghost Rider* at the same time I was finding it very difficult to fulfil all my obligations.

"Hopefully *Generation-X* will be as rewarding. And my goal with *Death* is to make the second one even better than the first."

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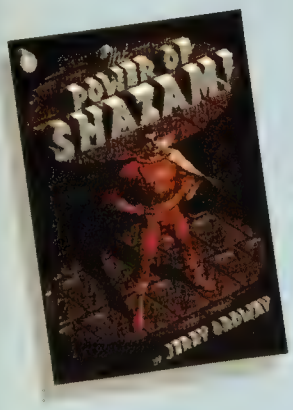
The POWER of SHAZAM!!

CONCLUDING OUR INTERVIEW WITH JERRY ORDWAY, WRITER, PENCILLER, INKER, ASSASSIN



WildStar © Al Gordon & Jerry Ordway
Captain Marvel © DC Comics

If this was Cluedo, the answer would be 'Jerry Ordway, in Metropolis, with the Alien'.

The finger of suspicion was pointing only a couple of months before events unfolded in Superman #75, but the clues were dotted along the trail of violence that began with the slow revelation of Doomsday's gnarly form. Jerry Ordway might not have swung the final punch, but he was an accessory before, during and after the fact to the death of Superman.

For late-comers to our interview (where were you?), Ordway was also responsible in his earlier days for the multiple-deaths of countless Earth-2 characters, and asked that the death of WildStar to be taken into consideration. Before we pass sentence, or you get the idea that I'm trying to hang a mass-murder rap on the artist/writer, let me just say that impressions can be deceptive. Most of the time his stories are free of any maniac killer, glint-in-the-eye blood baths; there's usually not enough blood to fill a sandbucket, let alone a lift-shaft. Death, however, tends to focus the mind, if only that of the media.

In Canada, the *X-Men Animated* has been pulled from the schedules, in one breath it's said to be because of the violence content, and Canada TV's new voluntary code about not showing violence before 9pm...in another breath it's just scheduling difficulties and, the soft voice of reason, that some balance of good overcoming evil has a strong educational value. "If you say *Road Runner* is violent and shouldn't go to air, maybe we shouldn't let the news go to air. Where does it all begin and end?"

Image have had their critics. They're not Code Approved, but they're not Mature Reader titles, and they've (sometimes) been top-shelved by some store owners. But their audience are the kids who lap up the frenetic and often violent action. I have to play devil's advocate. I have to say that page four of *WildStar #1*, where WildStar seemingly pulls someone's face off is violent.

"It's hard for me to look at *WildStar* as violent, but I've heard that it is," is Jerry's response. "I've heard from people that their local comic stores have put it up on the top rack so that little kids can't get to it.

"From my point of view I was dealing with a fantasy, and part of that fantasy was that a guy ripping off an alien is only akin to something you would see in, say, the *Alien* movie. What I was looking for there was dramatic shock as opposed to setting some kind of moral precedent, or whatever.

"I'm still kind of stunned..I can understand people being shocked by it, but I think part of the shock comes from it being *my* comic: it's fairly violent from *Jerry Ordway*. I think one of the attractions of doing *WildStar* was that I could break some of the stereotyping, certainly as far as being typed as a writer/artist who does goody-two-shoes characters. From my point of view it's hard to look at it as being violent. I understand that it *appears* to be, but when I was drawing it, my thought was more that he was pulling a piece of pizza off somebody's

face."

If you've still not caught on, the scene involved WildStar ripping a sybiotic alien from the face of one of his enemies, visually more interesting than, say, pulling it from his cardigan to the accompaniment of some velcro-separating sound effects.

That the first issue of *WildStar* came out around the same time as he completed his stint on Superman perhaps made the mental connections easier to channel. "It was just weird timing," says Jerry. But in that timing perhaps there's the real reason why the fingers were pointing at *WildStar* and such a fuss was made about its contents.

I'VE GOT THE POWER!

Can a mere child solve the murder of his parents?

There's a wonderful simplicity about *The Power of Shazam!* that harks back to the innocent 1930s and the days of pulp entertainment. When *entertainment* was what it was all about. The plots weren't so complicated that you needed diagrams to trace the movements of a story's cast and the heroes weren't hovering between angst and anger on every page. Most plots hinged on 'revenge' as a trigger, and it's still the prime motivater that runs through most storytelling.

There was a simplicity to becoming a superhero. While most of today's vengeful knights of the night are guilt-tripping across the skyline, back in February 1940 young orphan Billy Batson was selling newspapers on a busy street corner when he was approached by a complete stranger who took him into the subway to meet a 3,000 year- old wizard called Shazam who is looking for a successor to take over the daily grind of keeping the forces of evil which threatened to extinguish man from the face of the Earth at bay.

All you gotta do is say the word. *Shazam!*

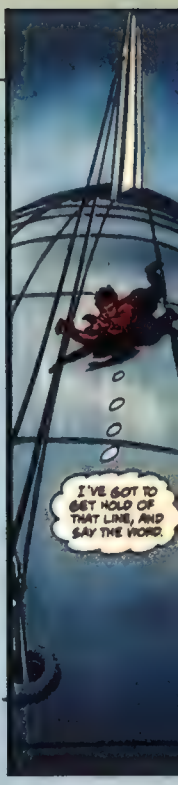
No telephone kiosks, no batpoles, or making sure your cape was tucked into your trousers when you were in civvies for Billy Batson. He just said 'Shazam' and a little lightning bolt later he had gained eighty pounds and an orange-and-gold costume that the kids would just *die* for.

Created by Bill Parker and C.C. Beck for *Whiz Comics*, Captain Marvel was the most successful comic book of its day, and when he switched to his own title he was selling three times as many copies each month as the most successful of today's comics, that little lightning bolt luring in readers like no other enhancement ever could.

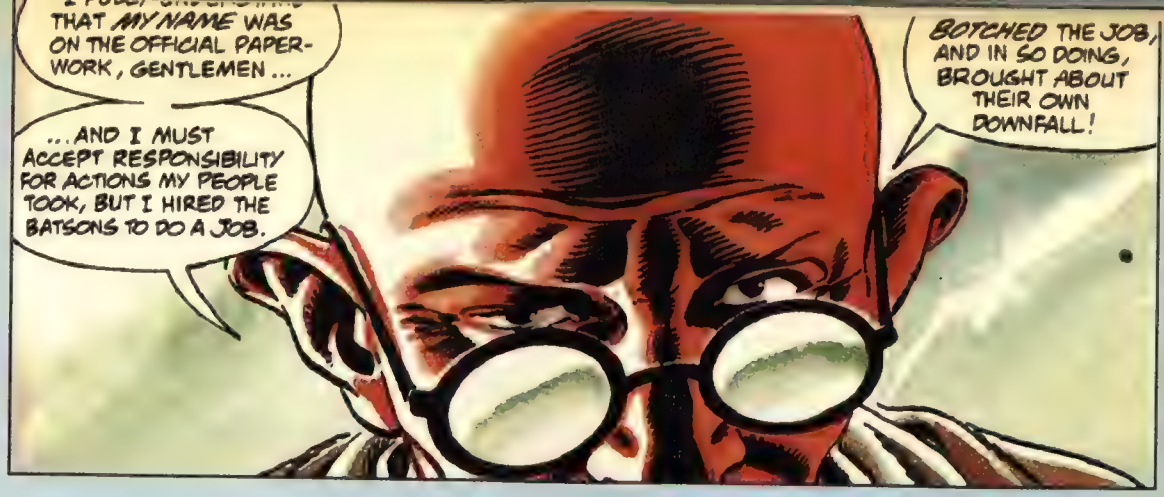
But even the World's Mightiest Mortal couldn't withstand the battering of a decade long court battle: soon after his appearance in *Whiz Comics*, National (DC) took out an injunction, claiming the character was too similar to their own Superman. The case was resolved when Captain Marvel's publishers, Fawcett Publications, folded their whole comics line in 1954 and Captain Marvel and sundry members of the Marvel family were retired to the comic book old folks home.

Billy has been brought out of retirement a number of times, most notably in the early 1970s, by National (!) and now under the name *Shazam!* so as not to run into any legal hassles with that other comic book Marvel. In the 1980s he was an occasional visitor to the *All-Star Squadron*, but remained frustratingly elusive to Jerry Ordway's pen.

"I'd practically drawn just about every other character from the Forties; Roy just loved the really obscure characters. But Captain Marvel was someone that DC were still licensing from Fawcett Publications at that point - every time they used him they would have to pay a fee - and *All-Star Squadron* just wasn't a good enough seller so it was always a battle to use him: 'How important is he to the story? Is he just going to be standing in the background?



I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE IT MYSELF, BUDDY!
OH, NO--! WHO CALLED THE POLICE?
I CAN HANG AROUND
MR MORRIS--HE'S GETTING AWAY!
SO IT SEEMS, UNLESS OF COURSE YOU WISH TO FLY AFTER HIM!


THAT MY NAME WAS ON THE OFFICIAL PAPER-WORK, GENTLEMEN ...
...AND I MUST ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTIONS MY PEOPLE TOOK, BUT I HIRED THE BATSONS TO DO A JOB.
BOTCHED THE JOB, AND IN SO DOING, BROUGHT ABOUT THEIR OWN DOWNFALL!

If that's the case we can't let you use him because it's just not worth paying the licensing fee.'

"When they finally got him in a couple of issues I'd left the book! I felt kinda cheated. And a couple of times when the opportunity came up to draw him I was either on a fill-in, or someone else would do him...whatever.

"He's always been in the back of my mind, and when I worked with Jonathan Peterson on the *Batman* movie adaptation, Jonathan had put together a deal with John Byrne to do Captain Marvel. Something happened - I believe it was a dispute over the 'War of the Gods' crossover a couple of years ago - and Byrne backed out.

"Jonathan called me up as asked me would I like to do it and I thought *Hmmm. Here I am again, following John Byrne*, but I agreed to it because I thought it would be an interesting challenge. I also added a few

I THOUGHT HMMM. HERE I AM AGAIN, FOLLOWING JOHN BYRNE, BUT I AGREED TO IT BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE AN INTERESTING CHALLENGE

demands, so to speak, to the package. One was that I'd be able to control the colour, and the other was that I wanted DC to commit to a format. I wanted it to be a nice package, basically, and not just another standard comic. The offer of the character was certainly interesting, but it was also the fact that getting a nice, upgraded package had eluded me: my work had never really been reprinted in book form, and the regular monthly run of a comic tends to get lost because fans remember what's coming out now and what the last issue was, but unless you crack open a box of old *Supermans* the work tends to be forgotten. Everybody's looking for the latest issue."

It's good to know someone has got the pride in their work that they would even *want* someone to remember it. Call me cynical, but there are too many creators out there who claim they're embarrassed by their past offerings. Not so Jerry:

"I'm proud of everything I've done. I don't think everything I've done is brilliant by any means, but I honestly don't think that I've ever just cranked out a job just for the sake of cranking it out. Pencilling especially: pencilling is a very personal thing for me and it requires a lot of mental concentration. It's very labour intensive. A page to me is like a diary - when I look at, say, a page of *Superman #50*, I can remember the day I was working on it. It's like a time machine to me. For that reason I would like to see some of the stories I drew collected. We've got the *Doomsday* trade paperback, but I still feel a little cheated because when you draw a story, it's *you*! When you write a story it's you and your collaborator.

"That's why I was very adamant about *Shazam* being a hardcover. This is a book that will sit on a shelf, and hopefully something that people will sample in a year from now - they'll see it on the shelf and take it down again."

The Power of Shazam! turned out to be a very nice package indeed, and for those of us who already have it, the temptation is already there to take it down from the shelf again, open up the cover and read:

Can a mere child solve the murder of his parents?

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

"In some ways it's a retelling of the origin. What I did was go back to the very first appearance in *Whiz Comics* - they had some tricky numbering and I think it was issue zero." (It was a Fawcett Publications ashcan, and Captain Marvel was known then as Captain Thunder) "I looked at what was originally done by C.C. Beck and Bill Parker and that was my guide. I took that story and added a fair chunk of new stuff.

"Are you familiar with the Captain Marvel serials from the 1940s?" he asks. I shake my head vigorously, which is fine in print, but doesn't quite achieve the same effect over the phone. "The old movie serial?" he prompts.

The cliffhanger serials? Flash Gordon and Crash Cameron? Yeh, I remember them (but only from the repeats. They used to do summer holiday early morning kids shows, long before all-day TV. There was always a cliffhanger serial. And *White Horses*.)

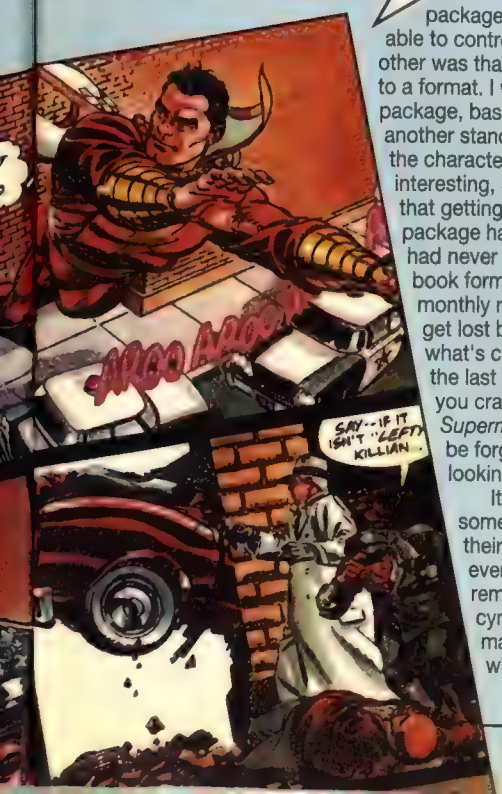
"The Captain Marvel one was very well done, and established a little bit of background, with Captain Marvel and Shazam being a little more Egyptian. They kind of plugged that in later on in Fawcett's original run, but it was never there at the origin. Billy Batson just walks into a subway tunnel, and there's Shazam!

"When I came to look at that first story I was curious about his parents and curious about why he was living on the steets. Why should Billy suddenly be the chosen one?

"I did what amounts to a forty page prologue that establishes Billy's parents as archaeologists and sets up the Egyptian angle, and hopefully sets up a reason why Billy is the one chosen to become Captain Marvel.

"The second chapter re-establishes Fawcett City as the background. Much like Metropolis is Superman's playground, Fawcett City is Captain Marvel's. Fawcett Publications never called it that, it was something Roy Thomas first did in the early 1980s but I always liked it. I've also re-established Doctor Silvana as the arch enemy of Captain Marvel and it still reads like a very complete story. That was my challenge."

A challenge he took on successfully. The results are more than just a cliffhanger serial in comic form, the 96-page format side-stepping the need to hit that mechanical climax every 22 pages, or every 15 minutes, so the pacing is better, and Jerry has been allowed the space to breath life into the characters - and slip in the odd in- joke: Parker Boulevard, Binder Boulevard - for Otto Binder, a prolific writer of Captain Marvel and the Marvel family - and neon namechecks to Whiz (a radio station in the story) and Carlini...or should that be The Great Carlini? Once you notice them, you start to look in every



JERRY ORDWAY

[illegible] but it's very much a comic page. It still has that black line which I thought was important. I was a little worried that by saying it was fully painted people would expect what Alex Ross does. *Marvels* is the best painted story I've seen, but that's part of the story that it ties into. That ultra realism makes you believe in it, and Marvel comics have always been set in real cities. It's an important part of helping you believe you're a bystander watching the birth of the Marvel universe. Alex is a huge Captain Marvel fan and we've talked to him a little - I would love to see him do a Captain Marvel related project.

"DC is also setting up a regular series of Captain Marvel to come out after *Zero Hour*. I'm actually talking to DC about - and this is your scoop, about inking *Zero Hour* because (writer/penciller) Dan Jurgens is a good friend of mine and it looked like a fun project to work on. I believe DC are using *Zero Hour* as a stand alone series that, once it's concluded, will allow every DC editorial office to do a retelling of their characters origins in an issue zero. It's up to the editor, but you could have a *Batman #0* that would tell the origin and firmly place it in the DC universe. Batman's not such a problem, but, say, Hawkman: 'Here's the definitive Hawkman and here's where he stands in DC continuity.'

"The same with Captain Marvel. I'm going to be writing the regular series, but I won't be drawing it." Even as he speaks, Jerry's young daughter decides to join in the conversation - and is briefly hired as penciller on the new series. "It'll be a very eclectic book". No more so than the reintroduction of Tawky Tawny, a talking tiger from the original run. But you'll have to wait to find out how Ordway manages the feat of bringing Tawky to a nineties interpretation of Shazam.

With the new series, pencilled by Mike Wieringo, scheduled for November, there's, unfortunately, no time for getting involved too deeply in the new *WildStar* series although Al Gordon has the approval of Image to do a second mini-series which Jerry may help launch. "I've got a lot of things that I'd like to do over the next couple of years," he says. "Characters of my own that I'd like to pitch.

"I've no idea who will ultimately publish them, but I have a couple of storylines that I'm gonna try to get some work done on, and then show them around. I think Image might be interested. I got the impression from some of the guys that they would like to look at what I'm doing."

And that goes for many of his fans, too. CW

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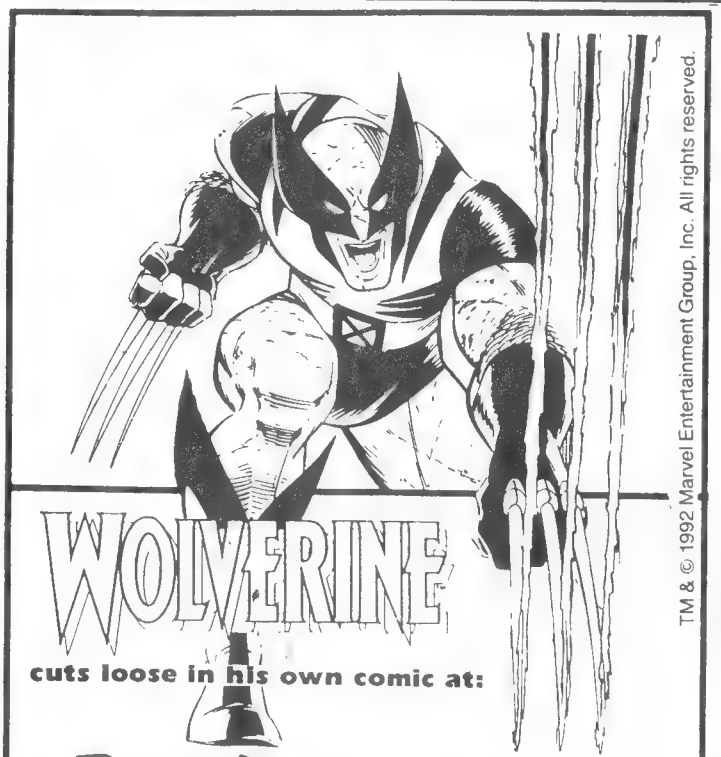

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PAUL DUNCAN EXPLORES THE ECLECTIC WORLD OF SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS

Like moths to a flame, or is it like rats from a sinking ship, British writers and artists have abandoned the shores of their homeland and flocked to the superhero capital of the world: America. The land of the free (if you've got money), and of the brave (if you're standing behind an uzi). There are reasons for getting published in America: to make money; to expand your readership; to make money; to have the freedom to express yourself; to make money; to be part of some childhood fantasy; and, of course, you don't mind if you make money along the way. Welcome to the American dream - the land of conformity, where you can write and draw whatever you want as long as it looks and sounds like Stan Lee/Jack Kirby or whoever the latest moneymaking superhero team is.

Am I being cynical?

I don't think so. Of course, I am in the position of knowing that there is a lot more to the American comics scene than boring old superhero comics. There are many more exciting sorts of comics than that, being produced by British creators, for some of the smaller American publishers. This is the first in a series of articles about these creators and publishers, and we begin with...

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS

No beating about the bush here: Slave Labor Graphics is a small publisher who have built up a good reputation because of their slightly eclectic range of comics and the dedication of publisher Dan Vado. Their best-selling comics at present are **Milk & Cheese**, **Pirate Corps!** and **Bill the Clown**. The first two in that list are written and drawn by Evan Dorkin, who worked on **Bill & Ted's Excellent Comic**. Also of note is **Tales From the Heart**, which is the true story of a young woman's experiences in the Peace Corps. An interesting comic to watch for is the appropriately titled **Attitude Lad**, which certainly has one, and is all the better for it.

Dan was telling me the other day about the large number of American comic shops going out of business because of the slump, and it's expected to get worse. Although Slave Labor's sales have been affected for the worse, it hasn't been as bad as it could have been because of the loyalty of the readers, and the nature of the comics. To help combat this situation, Dan has set up a toll free direct order line for retailers to order both his comics, and the comics of other small publishers. It's helped to cushion the blow.

Last year, Dan began publishing work by British creator Phil Elliott. He'd never really received submissions from Britain before, but now he gets at least one submission a month from this side of the water. The following is a list of writers and artists who Dan has either published, or is planning to publish over the coming months:

PHIL ELLIOTT

Phil Elliott is Britain's chief exponent of the clear-line school of comic strip art, as typified by European artists like Herge, Edgar P Jacobs, and Daniel Torres. He was one of the first to contribute to the British Small Press explosion of the Eighties, publishing *Fast Fiction*, and contributing to *Escape, Knockabout, Heartbreak Hotel*, and many magazines in America, Australia and France. He even did an ecologically-based Judge Dredd story. Known for his sensitive/absurd semi-autobiographical Gimbley stories, and the exquisite newspaper strip The Suttons, in more recent years Phil has tried to hone the craft-related side of his work, and relied on others to pen stories for him. This has resulted in a diverse set of credits, from *Ghostbusters* and *Man from Cancer* for Marvel, to *Greenhouse Warriors* for Tundra.

Phil recently coloured the *Death Wreck* mini-series for Marvel UK and self-published *Green house Warriors*. The fifth issue of *Green house Warriors* is drawn but Phil can't afford to publish it at the moment. Kitchen Sink are bringing out *Illegal Alien*, a 72 page story penned by James Robinson, about an alien living in England during the Sixties. "It's got everything: aliens, the CIA, KGB, the Mafia, East End crooks, Mods, Rockers and ice cream vans."

Slave Labor recently published *Mr Day and Mr Night* (written by Glenn Dakin) a wry stab at the superhero/anti-hero tradition, and *Bluebeard* (written by James Robinson) a three-issue "psychological murder mystery, set in exotic, and not so exotic, locations around Europe." Phil describes *Bluebeard* as having "lots of killing and oral sex" and comments that the subject matter is "a little bit different for me." A collected edition of *Bluebeard* will see print later in the year.

July sees the publication of *Second City*, a 96-page story written

by Paul Duncan, about an automated city of the future, where touch is frowned upon and sex is by artificial insemination. Jack is one small cog in the machine, and when it all begins to unravel, he has to watch out for himself. A ripping yarn that doesn't rip you off. But you better hurry, because time is running out. Do you ever get the feeling I'm quoting from publicity blurb?

SHANE O'DWYER

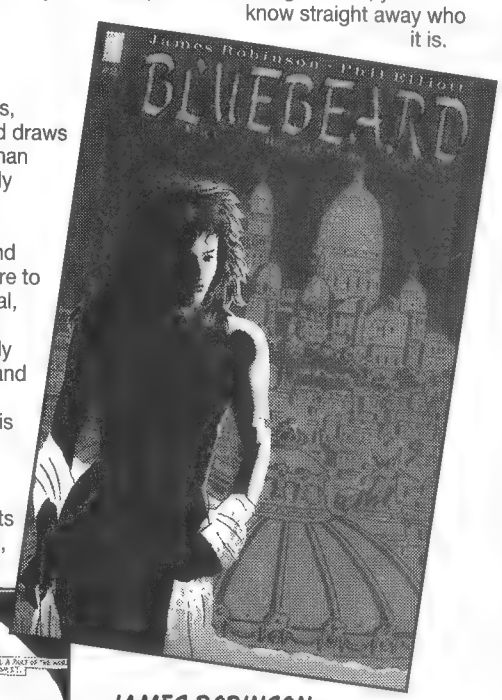
The bull terrior of British comics, Shane looks like Nick Cave and draws like George Grosz (an old German comic strip artist who eventually moved to America and drew cowboys). Shane has this unfortunate habit of drawing and redrawing his comics. If we were to get all artified and psychological, we'd start comparing him to Edvard Munch, who obsessively redrew the same images over and over, as though trying to recapture lost moments from his past. But Shane's only a comic book artist who's had no life outside comics since he left college, so he's got no moments to recapture, and even if he did,

there'd be no point in analysing them in something as trivial as a comic strip.

Take *Beautiful People* for example (please!) the new comic out now from Slave Labor. It was written in 1990, and Shane finished drawing it in 1991. The first version, I mean. Since then, I've seen at least three different versions, and God knows how many more he drew when I wasn't looking. I rang him up and asked if he'd sent the artwork off to Dan, and all he did was complain that he didn't have time to redraw one of the panels. After 3 years!?!?

Besides *Beautiful People*, Shane's worked on *Overload*, a nuclear psycho-thriller, or something, and *Profane*, a full-colour piece of weirdness that depressed the hell out of everyone who read it. In the future, Shane plans to do some more *Profane*, and work on *It's Raining Violence and Dead City*.

Anyway, if you happen to be in a comic shop, and see a thin, weedy guy dressed in black with a ponytail, and he's picking up copies of *Beautiful People* and drawing in them, you'll know straight away who it is.



JAMES ROBINSON

I last met James in a diner on Ventura Boulevard in Los Angeles. He'd written *London's Dark*. an Escape graphic novel drawn by Paul Johnson, and some then-unpublished *Grendel* stories. His writing had been well-received so he moved to the States and was trying to get his Green Card. He did a lot of speculative writing for various companies, and people liked his stuff, but the work wasn't being published and he wasn't being paid. Me? I'd have been in a right state, not knowing which way to turn, pestering people, running around, like a headless chicken. James? Cool as a cucumber behind his shades, nonchalantly drawing on his smokes. You could tell right away that he fitted in, that he'd make it. The confidence just oozed out of him.

Nowadays, is there any publisher James has not worked for, or is not planning to work for? People are aware of his more superhero-orientated work, like *The Golden Age* for DC and the Ultraverse project for Malibu, but there's a wide variety of styles and subject matter to be found in his other work. He's collaborated with Phil Elliott on two projects: *Illegal Alien*, an alien fugitive caught between Mods and the Mafia, and *Bluebeard*, a sort of **Black Kiss** for Agatha Christie fans. It just goes to prove that anything can happen if you put your mind to it and believe in what you're doing.

ANDY WATSON

Andy's is a common story. Coming out of college in 1992, he wanted to get into comics but didn't know how. So he began to publish his own press titles, to show what he could do. The result was three issues of *Samuri Jam*. Using these as samples of his work, Andy sent copies off to various publishers in Britain and America. He waited and waited, but with no result. Trained as a designer, he concentrated on illustration and design work for album covers, magazines and that kind of thing. Then he heard back from Dan Vado at Slave Labor Graphics and things have been going great ever since.

He's been writing and drawing short strips for *Deadline* - one is about the Meka Defence Force, a group of useless Transformer-like robots who keep messing up so they spend all their time sitting around drinking coffee.

The first full comic version of *Samuri Jam* is already out from Slave Labor Graphics - the first of a continuing series. Andy describes the comic as being "about a group of friends, having conversations, who develop over a period of time, so that you come to care about them." It's full of skateboarding, ice hocky, music, and comics. Drawn in a kind of kid-manga style, Andy says that the art-style of the later issues loosens up because "I wanted to get more expression and feeling into the characters, and the overly-designed style of the first issue was too restricting."

If there was one word to describe

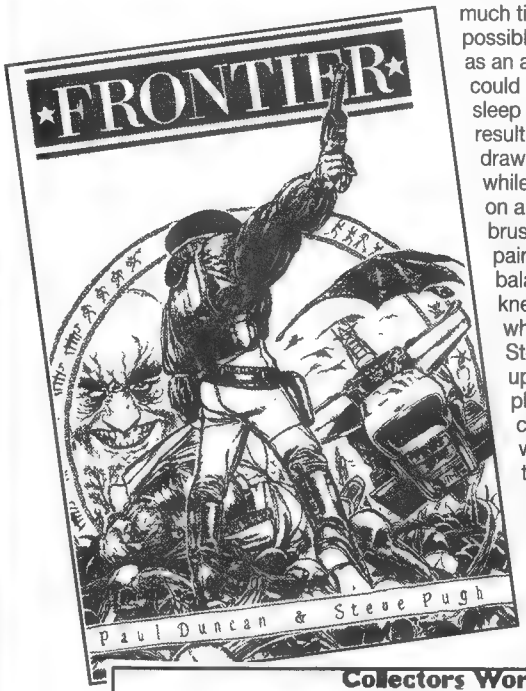
SO DYSON LET YOU ALL GET CARTED OFF TO JAIL BECAUSE HE WANTED TO LOOK "COOL" STEALING THE RAMP, EVEN THOUGH HE'D BOUGHT IT. THEN HE LET YOU ALL SWEAT IT OUT IN A CELL JUST SO HE WOULDN'T LOSE FACE! WHAT A FUCK UP!
MIND YOU IT WAS ALMOST WORTH IT TO PISS GREY OFF SO MUCH. Y'SHOULD OF SEEN HIS FACE WHEN HE LET US GO!
YOU MEAN SGT. GREY IS STILL AROUND!
GLURRK! WHAT!
YOU IDIOT! BREAKING 'N' ENTER WHEN YOU KNOW G STILL AROUND. HE' GOT A PERSONA VENDETTA AGAINST SKATE WHAT WOULD HA HAPPENED IF THE CHARGES HADN'T BEEN DROPPED?

this comic, it would have to be: Cool.

STEVE PUGH

Everyone says Steve Pugh is really sweet but, speaking personally, I've never tasted him. Cute and fluffy, and wrapped in a leather jacket, people of both sexes fall hopelessly in love with him. It's a fact. I've seen it happen.

To prevent mass pandemonium from breaking out wherever he goes, Steve decided to become an artist so that he could spend as much time indoors as possible. Unfortunately, as an art student, he could only afford to sleep on a sofa. The result is that Steve now draws all his comics while sitting sideways on a sofa - board, brushes, ink and paints precariously balanced on his knees. I remember when I first met Steve, I rang him up, he lifted the phone, I heard a crash, and the air went blue. Since then, Steve has built up a reputation for having one of Britain's most extensive libraries of swear words going back well into the last century. His friends only call him at pre-arranged times.



Steve got his big break in comics through a comic which was never published,... until now. The comic is called *Frontier*, and is coming out from, you guessed it, Slave Labor Graphics. *Frontier* is a SF western, a simple story of a wagon train on a far-off planet being pursued by a very bloodthirsty posse. And when I tell you that the posse includes John Wayne and Ernest Borgnine, you know just how bloodthirsty the posse is likely to get.

The leather and guns of *Frontier* enabled Steve to get his first professional job on four issues of *Grimjack*. Since then he's never looked back, initially working continuously (including nights and weekends) on *Youngblood*, and *Third World War in Crisis*. Steve doesn't like to turn down work, which has occasionally gotten him into trouble. There was one time when he completed forty pages, of which fourteen were painted in full colour, in forty-seven days. That was followed by *Hellblazer*, and Strontium Dogs in 2000AD. Somehow, don't ask me how, Steve managed to draw the Strontium Dogs pages in the wrong proportion, so *2000AD* had to place this 'designer' lettering down the side of the pages. Ironically, readers loved this innovative idea. Steve's presently drawing *Animal Man* to wide acclaim.

Now if you'll just excuse me, I've just realised I never checked the page sizes of *Frontier* before they were sent out...

PAUL DUNCAN

What can I say about Paul Duncan that hasn't already been said behind his back? Publisher of comics magazine ARK during the Eighties, and writer of occasional articles for various magazines, most of his comics output is about to be published by Slave Labor Graphics. Namely, *Beautiful People*, *Second City* and *Frontier*, as explained above. When I spoke to him earlier today, he said that his comics were being published with no money up front, and if profit is made, which seems unlikely, then he and the artists get a percentage. He said that he admired and appreciated the time, effort, and money that Dan Vado and other independent publishers have put into comics with little or no reward at the end of it. Paul is presently writing six novels, and researching a book on Noir fiction in his spare time.

With the dearth of comic publishers in this country willing to try something outside the superhero genre, it's no wonder that British creators are trying to make a name for themselves in America. Watch out for future forays into the world of the Brit Packers invading the independents of America, at a *Comic World* near you.

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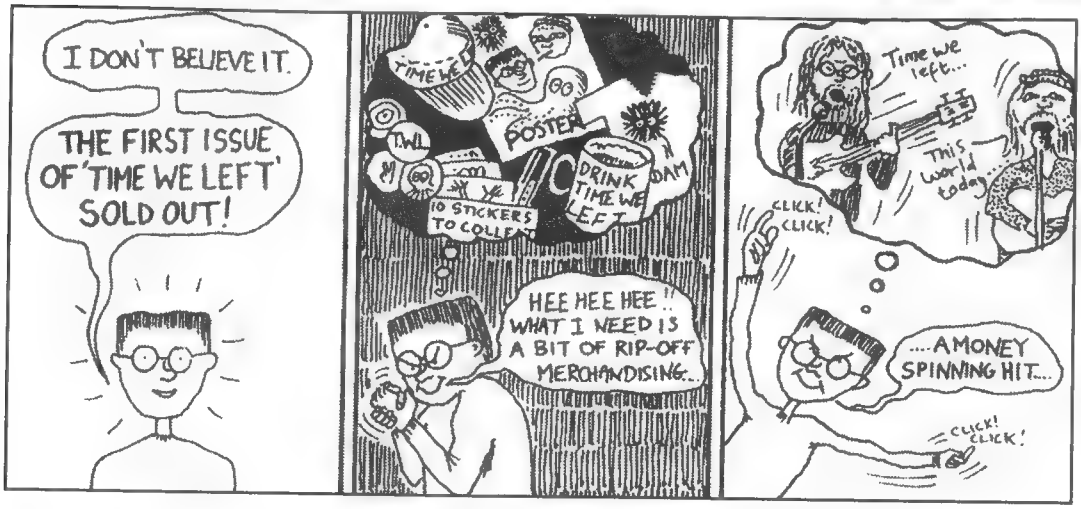
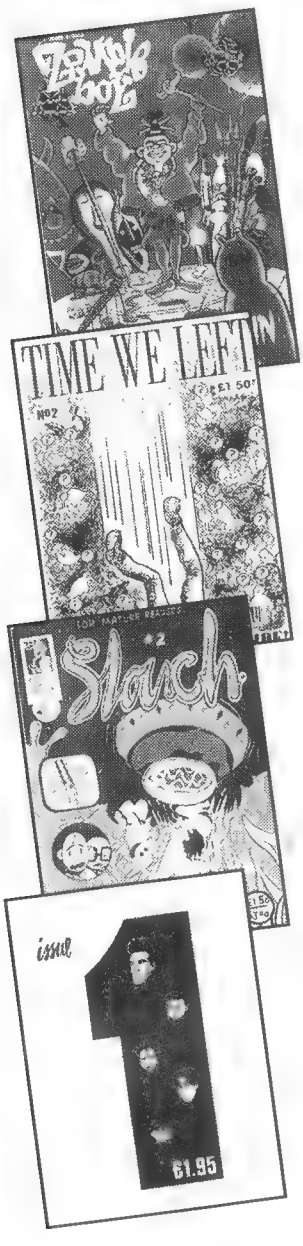
Small Press


I DON'T BELIEVE IT.
THE FIRST ISSUE OF 'TIME WE LEFT' SOLD OUT!
TIME WE LEFT
POSTER
T-WL
DRINK TIME WE LEFT
10 STICKERS TO COLLECT
HEE HEE HEE! WHAT I NEED IS A BIT OF RIP-OFF MERCHANDISING...
Time we left...
This world today...
CLICK! CLICK!
....A MONEY SPINNING HIT...
CLICK! CLICK!



Have you noticed how many mainstream comics publishers have been closing down lately? It's like the late eighties all over again, when the 'black and white explosion' started to crumble and people said that self publishing success was over. Quality would be the watchword for the future! Well, then we had the 'new universe syndrome' and the 'cover enhancements craze' and speculators were stung time and time again. Now people want a return to quality storytelling and artwork. Independant publishers are starting to build success; **Bone** is a best seller, **Exit** has paved the way for British small press comics. Watch your backs, because self publishing is gaining momentum again, but this time we have learnt from previous mistakes - spare the hype and razzmatazz, quality and patience builds a following. Watch this space ...

From beautiful Falmouth in Cornwall comes **Slouch #2**, essential for existential UFOlogists. Coopers Farm has all the ingredients of becoming a cult classic. The greys (aliens in the style of Whitley Streiber's **Communion**) have landed and made contact and are trying to release information regarding their involvement in human history, through a process of indoctrination. Conspiracy theories abound and confound, FBI agents are trying to cover things up, but we just know they'll fail. Send £1.50 + SAE to Slouch Comics, 49c The High Street, Falmouth, Cornwall, TR11 2AF.

Issue 1 of **Issue 1** may be a strange concept, but it is still a very stylish comic indeed. A Tank Girl take-off, Morrissey P.I. and a strip about Mick Jagger clones aim this very much at the trendy market, but my fave is Snorepig And Weepatch who remind me of 90's versions of the Love is characters. Tres cute indeed! It costs £1.95, but has professional printing and postage thrown in, to explain the slightly higher cost. Send your funds to Sam, Issue 1, 59a Darville Road, Stoke Newington, London, N16 7PT.

Andy Roberts is one of *the* names of the small press scene. As well as editing CCG newsletter and contributing to various zines, he publishes his own work. **Instant Comics** is a retrospective of his work over the years, with sketchbook pages, Wiija (mucho trendy record label) adverts and assorted strips. If you want to see the work of one of Britain's longest serving unsung cartoonists, send a pound to AND/OR Comics, 25 Hart Street, Oxford, OX2 6BN.

Surprise of the month is a comic sent from Dallas in the good ol' US of A. **Zombie** Boy is a) way cool, b) very professionally produced and c) probably extremely difficult to find over here. Having said all that, though Zombie Boy's artwork does kick butt, the story leaves something to be desired. Imagine an undead Richie Rich and you'll pretty much get the picture. The best way to get hold of this is probably to whine a lot at your local comic shop. They can get it from Timbuktu Graphics, P.O. Box 821143, Dallas, Texas, 75382-1143, or apparently through most major distributors.

Time We Left #2 looks at first as though it will be a superhero parody. In a way it is, but it goes much further, mixing the parody with some fun autobiographical stuff and some plain wacky hi-jinks. Featuring the origin and death of Paul, the artist all in one issue may present some problems for future money spinning plotlines, but I'm sure he will find a way around it. £1.80 includes postage from P. Hatcher, 16 Dene Close, Wellingborough, Northants, NN8 5QP.

Inkling is one of those publications that refuses to lie down. Having done so for 11 issues, it has managed to work itself up to having a good reputation, colour cover and most recently, sponsorship from Stella Artois Dry. Of the strips included, 'Randy The Skeleton' has some of the most precise fine line work I've ever seen, giving it a style all it's own, 'The Murderous Teddy Bear' is a Posy Simmonds from hell and 'Art Turkey' combines surrealism, dada, cubism and more, in an art historians nightmare. **Inkling** is more than just value for money at £2.00 including postage, though you should be able to find it at most comic shops, as Titan distribute it. Send cheques etc. to **Inkling**, 22a St Pauls Road, London, N1 2QN.

Happy, happy, joy, joy! **Harpy** is back with a second issue and it *don't* disappoint! If you didn't buy this when I last reviewed it, do so now. I have your number see and I'll send round the Jehovah's Witnesses if you fail to comply. The story continues and I still have no idea what it is about, but I'm determined to continue reading until I do. In this issue, we meet the insect loving boss of Mystic Shit Inc., three child stars who abduct Plum Plum and we discover the beach in Doc Bumble's front room. There's also a short story about the dangers of glue. For the strangest comic book experience, send money (about £1.50 should do) plus SAE to Nick Mackie, 15 The Paragon, Clifton, Bristol, BS8 4LA.

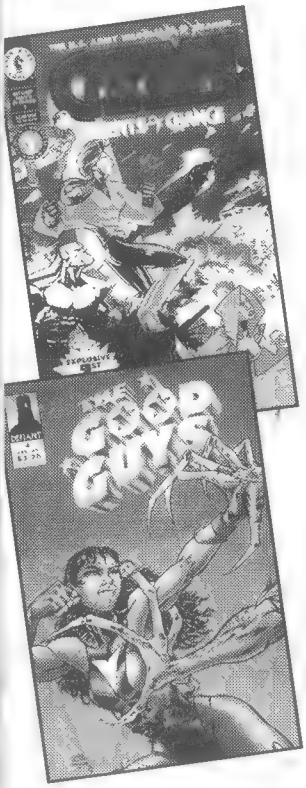
Last, but certainly not least is another comic I've reviewed before. **Le Roquet #3** is out and this time it has a sparkling attractive colour cover, plus high quality printing. Les Cartoonistes Dangereux are going from strength to strength, with many of their number currently having their own series or appearing in mainstream comics. They have the very sensible idea that British work will go down better in Europe than America and so, many of their number are bi-lingual or come from other countries. They are also angry about the way cartoonists are perceived in this country as opposed to other European countries, where cartoonists get grants and recognition. The content is of a very high standard, particularly fine strips are 'Knuckles The Malevolent Nun', 'Je M'Appele Lydia', 'Brass Monkeys' (a continuing strip by the Editor, Brad! Brooks) and 'Tisco On The Beach'. Style and content of these strips vary immensely, but each is endearing in it's own way. **Le Roquet** is available from Les Cartoonistes Dangereux, 48 Barnstaple Road, Harold Hill, Romford, RM3 7TD.

STEVE COOK

Reviews

With last year's massive market expansion turning out to have been less of a boom than a really pronounced blip, what passes for normality seems to be returning to comicland. The main problem for retailers when publishers try to cater for the whims of speculators is not to get caught

I DON'T LIKE THIS
THE CAN DEBATE THIS AFTER WE'VE WON THE BATTLE.
WARGMAKER, YOU AND MECHA WILL DEFEND THE CITY ON THE GROUND
TITAN AND REBEL WILL SEE TO THE AIR DEFENSE RUBY, I WANT YOU INSIDE THE CITY--
--AND I'LL COORDINATE FROM THE CITADEL. REMEMBER, I WANT MINIMAL LOSS OF LIFE.



out and end up with tons of unwanted stock, an affliction from which Britain's shops suffer less heavily than those in America. Still, there's an awful lot of similar product for buyers to sift through. Publishers seem to feel the path to success lies not with innovation, but with emulation; and whenever one of these brave new directions fails, as so many do, a typical comic publisher has only one solution another two exactly the same.

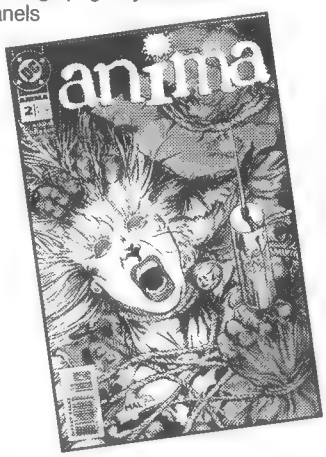
If **Amazing Spider-Man #388** (Marvel, $2.95) is any guide, the key word for the latest 'new Spider-era' is 'dumb'. Super-hero stories, as much as any fiction, require acceptance of a new set of rules by the reader; but here disbelief hasn't been suspended, it's been sent on a bungee jump off the edge of the planet. Like the moment where the mastermind behind the life-sucking device poses the theory that as it's a machine, it would work better sucking mechanical life. Like the tension that mounts as Spider-Man finds he can't bear to strike the imitation of his father because of the facial resemblance. Mere panels later, he susses that he can overcome this problem by pounding the face into an unrecognisable pulp... This is dumb like crowds of grown men standing around in megastores watching police videos of traffic surveillance are dumb.

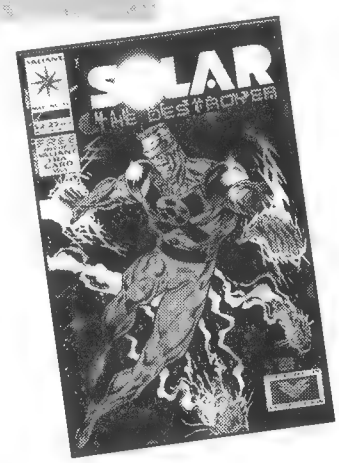
Elsewhere, there are encouraging attempts to promote work of higher quality. **Power & Glory #I** (Malibu/Bravura, $2.50) kicks off Howard Chaykin's new project, packed with insults but thankfully not insulting. It's very much the familiar Chaykin style (of course you know who the central hero resembles), mixing slick illustration and strong design elements; disconnected strands converge and a plan makes itself clear. Along the way, dry satire shows contempt for a world of preening hypocrites and ego out of control.

Catalyst: Agents Of Change #1 (Dark Horse/Comics' Greatest World, $2.00) has a more conservative storytelling style than **Power & Glory**, but both titles intelligently tackle themes which arise from super-powers meeting political powers. In **Catalyst**, a grand experiment to create a social utopia breaks away from its host country. As shown with crisp artwork and nicely restrained writing, basic human deviousness and political manoeuvres make paradise a remote prospect. Thoughtful titles such as this remain oddities, however. The super-hero genre can support explorations of the effects of power and violence; or it can just be power and violence. Experience across the various media used by fiction shows that the way to achieve a significant audience and keep it is through well-developed, accessible stories - over time, supporting quality makes more financial sense than going for short-term flashiness and quick profits. The point is disregarded by many, though not just in comics, not just with super-heroes.

It's been an eternity since we had a comic about a super-hero who's still at high school, but that particular gap in the market's just been filled by **Damage #1** (DC, $1.75). It's quite sweet in its determination to do all the stuff high school super-hero comics always do - sensitive newcomer gets noticed by the most popular girl in school and falls foul of sports king and bully Brad... but all this is merely a diversion around that perennial kid's favourite 'your parents aren't who you thought they were'. Utter formula.

Anima #2 (also DC, $1.75) doesn't play nearly so safe; it's a sprawling, vigorous mess of a teen comic. Grunge music, runaways and strange happenings collide, and there's no-one around to bandage the techniques of clear storytelling that were hurt in the pile-up. Artist Malcolm Davis favours a montage page layout, with panels





and perspectives melting into each other: the writers use their space with lively slogans. Anima has a raging momentum, but someone should've remembered that we need to be able to follow the events.

The Good Guys #4 (Defiant, $3.25), meanwhile, has an entire group of kids to play with. The impressions formed in the first scene are of poor artwork and clumsy writing; but there may be more to it. The flimsy way in which the figures are drawn and their static, awkward expressions give the issue the feel of an old-fashioned children's storybook: it feels appropriate for the simplistic and strange plot. With visits into Ditko-esque parallel dimensions and bizarrely misfiring humour, **The Good Guys** is like **The New Mutants** meeting **Flaming Carrot**: accident or design?

There is a trait shared by the Defiant titles and other parts of the market, such as Rob Liefeld's Extreme imprint - their apparent amateurishness. Inspired by their favourite writers and artists, many comics fans will have made up their own heroes, only to feel that constructing a genuinely powerful story may be beyond them; but with comics such as **Team Youngblood #7** (Image/Extreme, $1.95), the gap between the skills of its creators and its young readers is reduced to nothing. As the letters section shows, the comic's flood of one-dimensional characters - little more than costumes and codenames - connects in a very direct way with its audience, who are moved to take up pen and paper... and make art. Far from being simple crap, Liefeld's group of titles is revealed to be a brilliant long-term project to foster a spirit of community and creativity across nations. Made you look.

Richard Hill

Review copies courtesy of Birmingham's Fantastic Store (Telephone 021-643 3667). Prices are quoted in dollars; the sterling rate may vary slightly from shop to shop.

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BOOKS

Adams, Douglas *The Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy*. Millenium, £4.99. Miniature edition of Adams' classic novel. *Mar*

Adams, Douglas *Dr. Who, The Scripts: The Pirate Planet*. Titan, £4.50. The script of Adams' Doctor Who adventure. *Mar 25*

Anthony, Piers *The Colour of Her Panties*. New English Library, £4.99. Mela Merwoman leaves her tail behind her when seeking out a suitable husband, joined on her quest through Xanth by destiny-seeker, Che Centaur, and Gwenny Goblin, still waiting for her contact lenses. *Mar 17*

Asimov, Isaac *Forward the Foundation*. Bantam, £4.99. Seventh and concluding volume of the Foundation series, completed only weeks before Asimov's death. *Mar 31*

Atkins, Peter *Morningstar*. Eclipse (sc). Graphic novel. *Mar*

Bova, Ben *Death Dream*. New English Library, £5.99. From the author of *Mars*, this new novel is set in the computer induced hallucinatory world of virtual reality, a techno-thriller of dreams and realities that some agencies would kill for. *Mar 17*

Bradley, Marion Zimmer *The Forbidden Tower*. Severn House (hc). Reprint novel. *Mar*

Bradley, Marion Zimmer *The Forest House*. Michael Joseph (tpb). Reprint novel. *Mar*

Brooks, Terry *The Talismans of Shannara*. Legend. Reprint novel. *Mar*

Cadigan, Pat *Fools*. HarperCollins, £4.99. *Mar*

Carroll, Jonathan *From the Teeth of Angels*. HarperCollins (hc). *Mar*

Cornell, Paul & Martin Day & Keith Topping *The Avengers Programme Guide*. Virgin, £4.99. Pretty much what it says, from the authors of *The Guinness Book of Classic British TV*. Includes background notes and interviews with the stars of Avengers and New Avengers. *Mar 17*

Costello, Matthew *seaQuest DSV 2: Fire Below*. Millenium, £12.99 (hc). Second tie-in to the tv series. An undersea terrorist situation ultimately results in the surfacing of an ancient, very hostile undersea race. *Mar 3*

Crispin, A.J. *Star Trek, the Next Generation: Sarek*. Simon & Schuster. Based on the tv series. *Mar 7*

Delamare, David & Nigel Suckling *Mermaids and Magic Shows: The Paintings of David Delamare*. Paper Tiger, £10.95 (sc). Beautiful collection of fantasy paintings by English-born, American-based artist Delamere with text by Nigel Suckling. *Mar 17*

Dick, Philip K. *Time Out of Joint*. Roc. Reprint novel. *Mar*

Dicks, Terrance *The Talons of Weng-Chiang*. Target, £3.99. Last in the Target reprint programme, this one based on a Tom Baker series first screened in 1977. *Mar 17*

Donaldson, Stephen (Ed) *Strange Dreams*. HarperCollins, £5.99. Anthology gathering stories by Greg Bear, Jorge Luis Borges, Orson Scott Card, Harlan Ellison, M. John Harrison, Franz Kafka, Garry Kilworth, Rudyard Kipling, Nancy Kress, Lucius Shephard, Theodore Sturgeon, Sheri S. Tepper, Jack Vance, John Varley and Walter Jon Williams. *Mar*

Eliot, Marc *Walt Disney: Hollywood's Dark Prince*. Andre Deutsch, £17.99 (hc). Non-fiction Kitty Kelly-style biog of Disney which shows him as a tormented soul using his wealth and prestige to mould a ferocious empire, an exploiter and alcoholic.

Essex, Peter *The Dream Stealer*. Orion, £14.99 (hc). A clairvoyant is summoned by spirit voices to Wistman's Wood where she uncovers the story of an ancient, violent death, and the story of the Dream Stealer. *Mar*

Farris, John *Minotaur*. Severn House (hc). Reprint horror novel. *Mar*

Finder, Joseph *Extraordinary Powers*. Orion, £14.99 (hc). Cold War thriller, with the CIA backing a mind-reading programme. *Apr*

Gabaldon, Diana *Dragonfly in Amber*. Arrow. Reprint novel. *Mar*

Gibson, William *Virtual Light*. Viking (tpb). Reprint novel. *Mar*

Green, Simon R. *Shadows Fall*. Gollancz, £5.99. Shadow's Fall is the place where all stories find their ending, all quests are concluded, and every lost soul finds its way home at last. The town where dreams go to die...and where a serial killer now stalks the streets. A traitor has betrayed the town to the outside world. Green's most ambitious novel to date, and his best. *Mar 31*

Gross, Ed & Mark Altman *Deep Space 9 Log Book*. Boxtree, £9.99 (sc). Behind the scenes of the first series, plus episode guide. *Mar*

Grundy, Stephan *Rhinegold*. Michael Joseph (hc/tpb). *Mar*

Haining, Peter (Ed.) *The Frankenstein Omnibus*. Orion, £14.99/£8.99 (hc/tpb). Anthology with stories by Herman Melville, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Bloch and many others. *Mar*

Haldeman, Jack C. II *Star Trek Adventures #4: Perry's Planet*. Titan, £4.50. On a diplomatic mission, the crew of the Enterprise encounter the enigmatic Wayne Perry and a power that makes them unable to defend themselves. *Mar 24*

Hamilton, Peter F. *A Quantum Murder*. Pan. *Mar*

Harris, Elizabeth *Time of the Wolf*. HarperCollins (hc). *Mar*

Harrison, Harry *The Stainless Steel Rat Sings the Blues*. Bantam, £14.99 (hc). The ninth novel starring the incorrigible, conniving, slippery Jim diGriz, trapped into tracing an alien artifact on the planet Liokukae with only 30 days to live, thanks to a slow-acting poison. *Mar 31*

Herbert, James *The City*. Pan, £8.99 (sc). Graphic novel, follow-up to Herbert's Rats novels. Illustrated by Ian Miller. See feature next month. *Mar 25*

Huggins, James Byron *A Wolf Story*. Hodder & Stoughton, £4.99. The *Watership Down* style adventures of wolves. *Apr*

Hutson, Shaun *Deadhead*. Warner. Horror novel. *Mar*

Hutson, Shaun *White Ghost*. Little Brown, £14.99 (hc). Sean Doyle (from Renegades) is a counter-terrorist agent assigned to an IRA operation. Associational thriller. *Mar*

Jacques, Brian *Mossflower*. Legend. Reprint novel. *Mar*

Jacques, Brian *Redwall*. Legend. Reprint novel. *Mar*

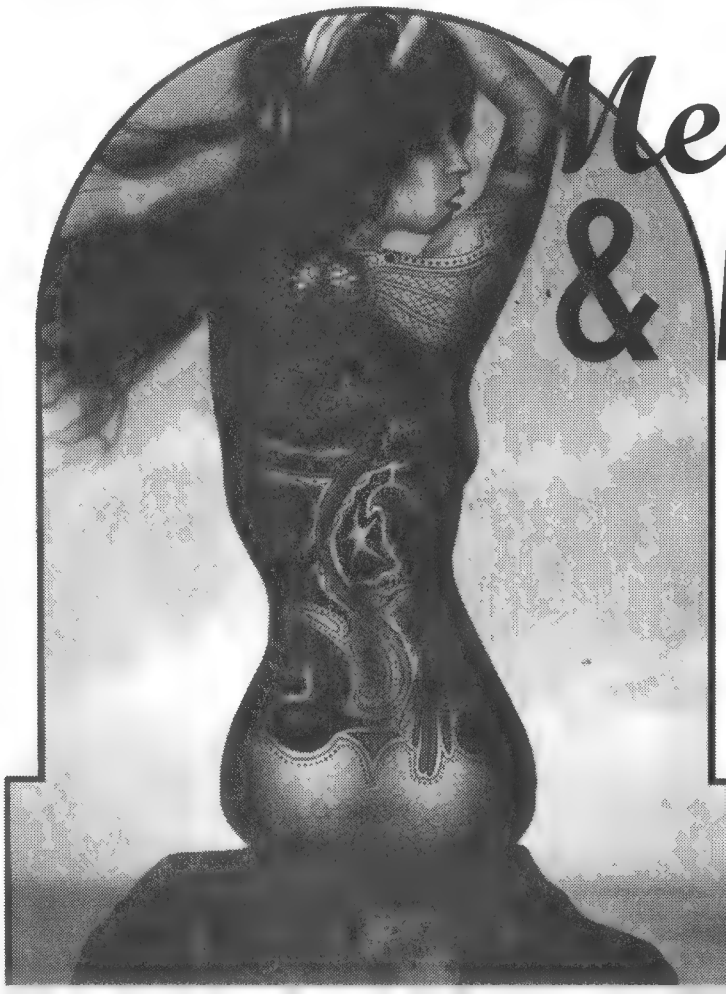
James, P.D. *The Children of Men*. Penguin, £4.99. Better known for her crime novels, this one takes place in 2021, 25 years after a plague of infertility has swept the human race when England is under the despotic rule of Xan Lyppiatt. *Mar 3*

King, Stephen *Needful Things*. New English Library, £5.99. Reprint to tie-in with the movie. *Mar 3*

Lackey, Mercedes & Larry Dixon *Black Gryphon*. Millenium, £4.99/£8.99 (hc/tpb). Set 1500 years after the events chronicled in Lackey's *Heralds of Valdemar* series, this novel introduces a sort of 'A-Team' of heroic defenders to the fantasy world. *Mar*

Lawhead, Stephen R. *The Endless Knot*. Lion. Reprint novel. *Mar*

Lee, Tanith *Darkness, I*. Little Brown, £15.99 (hc). In the third book in Lee's Blood Opera sequence,



dia

Rachaela has given birth to her second daughter, Anna who soon grows to beautiful, white-haired maturity. Before Rachaela can discover how a three-year-old can seem sixteen, Anna is kidnapped by Cain, outcaste of the Scarabae, and taken to a white pyramid hidden in the ice at the end of the world. *Mar 17*

Lee, Tanith *Eva Fairdeath*. Headline, £16.99/£8.99 (hc/tpb). Set in a future world of yellow-skyed pollution, a roaming stranger arrives. To some he's a seller of death, but to slavegirl Eva Belmort he may provide the chance of a new life. *Mar*

Lee, Tanith *Nightshades*. Headline, £4.99. Reprint. Mar

Lee, Tanith *Personal Darkness*. Warner, £4.99. Second in the Blood Opera sequence. The vampiric Scarabae, scattered after volume one, begin to regroup. *Mar 17*

McAuley, Paul J. *Pasquale's Angel*. Gollancz, £15.99 (hc). Combining elements of mystery, thriller, historical novel and fantasy, Renaissance Florence is transformed by the inventions of da Vinci. Pasquale, an apprentice painter, finds himself drawn into a plot involving the artist Raphael and the Great Engineer himself when he finds himself on the scene of an apparently impossible murder. *Mar*

McAuley, Paul J. *Red Dust*. Gollancz, £4.99. 600 years after it has been terraformed, the Red Planet is dying, the only hope of survival an unlikely Messiah who must navigate his way through real and virtual Mars. *Mar*

Mann, Phillip *A Land Fit For Heroes 1: Escape to the Wild Wood*. Gollancz, £4.99. Modern Britain is under the rule of Imperial Rome, technologically advanced but very different to our own. A young Roman, Viti, escapes to the forests that thickly cover much of the island. *Mar*

Mann, Phillip *A Land Fit For Heroes 2: Stand Alone Stan*. Gollancz, £15.99 (hc). In an alternate world where Rome still rules, the runaways from the previous novel flee to Stand Alone Stan, a community built around an ancient standing stone on the Yorkshire Moors where their paths begin to diverge and very different destinies await them. *Mar*

Newman, Kim *The Quorum*. Simon & Schuster (hc). Horror novel. *Mar*

Niven, Larry & Jerry Pournelle *The Moat Around Murcheson's Eye*. HarperCollins, £4.99. Reprint novel, follow up to *The Mote in God's Eye* set a quarter of a century after mankind's first encounter with aliens. The Moties are condemned by evolution to breed or die, as humanity quarentine, analyse and agonise over them. Recommended. *Mar*

Pratchett, Terry *Johnny and the Dead*. Corgi, £3.99. Second tale to feature Johnny Maxwell, helping the dead stop the council moving of their bodies so they can sell the cemetary for development. *Mar 3*

Pringle, David (Ed.) *Warhammer: Ignorant Armies*. Boxtree, £3.99. Original anthology of Warhammer stories by Kim Newman, Bill King and others. *Mar*

Rickman, Phil *The Man in the Moss*. Macmillan, £14.99 (hc). An archaeological dig uncovers a centuries old body, but its removal spells danger for the inhabitants of the village of Bridelow. The forces of light and dark struggle for possession of the Man as Samhain approaches - the Celtic Feast of the Dead. *Apr*

Roberts, Gareth *Tragedy Day*. Doctor Who, £4.99. New Adventure for the Doctor set in Empire City on the planet of Olleril, where the privaledged few are about to celebrate Tragedy Day. *Mar 17*

Rusch, Kristine Kathryn *Heart Readers*. Millenium, £4.99. Twins, Ele and Vasenu, face the dilemma of succession to the throne of Leanda. Stashie, who can see the truth in the heart of any person, may provide the answer. *Mar 3*

Saul, John *Guardian*. Bantam, £14.99 (hc). The forces of nature and evil combine as, cut-off from the outside world, Mary Anne Carpenter protects her children from an unseen killer - who is closer than she thinks. *Mar 31*

Saul, John *Shadows*. Bantam, £4.99. The Academy, a cliff-top school for gifted children, falls under the power of an unspeakable evil. Can one student resist the seductive invitation that will lead him into the shadows? *Mar 31*

Skipp, John & Craig Spector (Eds.) *Book of the Dead III*. Severn House (hc). Reprint horror collection. *Mar*

Smith, Michael Marshall *Only Forward*. HarperCollins, £4.99. *Mar*

Stammers, Mark & Stephen James Walker Eds. *Decalog*. Doctor Who, £4.99. Anthology of Dr. Who stories linked by the arrival of a strange man in the office of a private investigator in 1940s Los Angeles. The man has no memory, but as he pulls objects from his pockets they stimulate recollections - only he seems to have been seven different people. Ten new stories by New Adventures regulars. *Mar 17*

Stine, R.L. *Fear Street: Fear Street*. Archway, £2.99. Young adult horror series. *Mar*

Tarr, Judith *Lord of the Two Lands*. Pan. *Mar*

Tepper, Sheri S. *A Plague of Angels*. HarperCollins (hc). *Mar*

Tepper, Sheri S. *Sideshow*. HarperCollins, £4.99. *Mar*

Vallejo, Boris *The Boris Vallejo Portfolio*. Paper Tiger, £12.95 (sc). Oversized collection of poster-size art by one of the world's top fantasy artists. *Mar*

Voermans, Paul *The Weird Colonial Boy*. Gollancz, £4.99. Hilarious comedy SF. Nigel is a drongo with an interest in music (the Pistols - it's 1978), sex (which he isn't getting) and tropical fish. One of his fish finds its way into another dimension, and Nigel follows...to a violent land of prison camps, public executions and chain gangs. *Mar*

Wood, Bridget *Sorceress*. Headline, £16.99/£8.99 (hc/tpb). A kidnapped sorceress heralds a rescue attempt by the flirtatious Rumour and his companions. *Mar*

Wright, Susan *Star Trek, The Next Generation: Sins of Commission*. Pocket UK, £3.99. 29th volume from the tv series. *Mar 7*

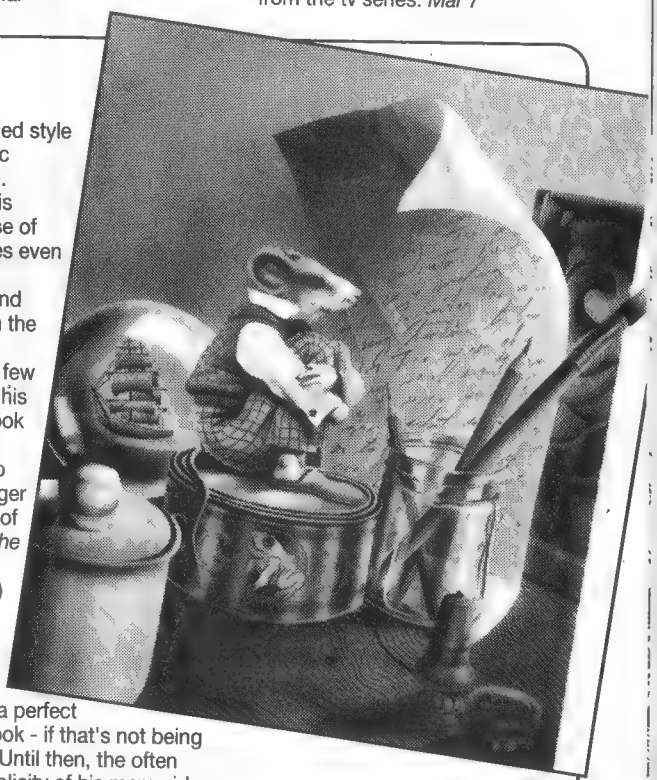
rmaids, MAGIC

Paper Tiger have produced some superb books over the years, gathering together some of the finest fantasy artists into anthologies and publishing single artist collections and portfolios in beautifully presented softcover packages. You don't have to be either a fantasy fan or an art critic to appreciate them.

I'm from the school of 'I like what I like' criticism, and in David Delamare's Mermaids and Magic Shows there's a lot to like, from the subtle undersea world of the siren of the seas which are the pure art of the nude in sublime settings, to the contrasting surealist anthropomorphism of his book illustrations and gallery work where figures can be transported to fantastic places that defy common principals. If this is a representative collection - and the title suggests that it has concentrated on certain aspects of Delamare's work - his work shows a fascination with the subconscious workings of the mind, his characters cloaked in masks and ghosts, his machinery with no obvious motive power, his mermaids often making a more conscious statement that there is far more going on under the surface than you can see above the waterline.

As for Delamare himself, he's English born but based in Portland. The text is partly biographical, written by Nigel Suckling, who has painted an interesting portrait himself: Delamare comes across as a thoughtful, solitary worker, his ideas growing from abstracts and worked into planned and defined areas. The mermaid painting began in 1980, the subject matter appealing to his imagination, the more recent pictures here showing a much refined style and symbolic presentation. Elsewhere his oblique sense of design makes even the oddest characters find their place in the picture.

From the few examples of his children's book illustrations I would love to see Paper Tiger reprint more of his stories. *The Christmas Secret* (1991) has never appeared in the UK, I believe, and would make a perfect Christmas book - if that's not being too obvious. Until then, the often beautiful simplicity of his mermaids and the ethereal complexity of his fantasy artwork make this a book that won't rest on a shelf for long.



As I said above, I like what I like, and this is a book I very much like.

Neil Cooper

MultiMedia

CONTINUED

Wright, T.M. ***Nursery Tale***. Gollancz, £4.99. Sequel to *Strange Seed*. When a couple move to a new estate they discover that the surrounding ancient woodlands are full of new neighbours - not all of them friendly. *Mar*

Yeovil, Jack ***Dark Future 4: Route 666***. Boxtree, £3.99. Latest in the cybergoth series by Yeovil (actually film critic Kim Newman). *Mar*

FILMS

News: With **Schindler's List** taking a truckload of Oscar awards this year from its 12 nominations it's interesting to note that Spielberg's success was not guarenteed: his 1986 film **The Color Purple** was nominated in 11 catagories, but failed to win any of them...But on with the news: the James Cameron scripted **Strange Days** has a lead player in Ralph Feines, one of the few *Schindler* participants not to get an Oscar; Katheryn Bigelow directs and the cast includes Bono of U2...Keanu Reeves is to star in the roll of William Gibson's **Johnny Mnemonic** inching ahead of Val Kilmer and Christopher Lambert to join Dolph Lundgren and Ice T...After that, Reeves will star in an American version of the Japanese anime, **Crying Freeman**...Wesley Snipes has signed on to skydive in **Drop Zone** for $7m for John Badham and Paramount. Steven Seagal wanted the role, but his bosses at Warner Bros wouldn't allow him...After finishing **The Specialist** (with Sylvester Stallone), Sharon Stone may head for **Track Down**, already being described as *Die Hard* in the Chunnel...The film of David Brin's novel **The Postman** will be directed by Ron Howard and star Oscar winner Tom Hanks...John Malkovich, Julia Roberts and Glenn Close will star in Mary Reilly, once a Tim Burton film, now a Stephen Frears film...Expect media interest to grow concerning **The Mask**, based on the Dark Horse comic, as leading player Jim Carrey is the golden boy of Hollywood at the moment, his latest off-beat movie, **Ace Ventura, Pet Detective** striking gold at the box-office...If you've not been to see **The Aristocats**, re-released at the end of last month, you're really missing out. G'wan, risk having some fun for once...and talking of animation, it looks like **Judge Dredd** could be in development from Surge Comic Properties Inc.... and there's a rumour going around that **Rogue Trooper** could also be in line for the animation treatment

VIDEO

News: **Batman Returns** joins the original film on Widescreen on May 9, alongside widescreen editions of **GoodFellas** and **Lethal Weapon 3**.

Babylon 5. Warners (PG). The opening episode of a new series currently showing in the USA and due to appear on Channel 4 in May. Babylon 5 is a spacestation where, after decades of war, ambassadors from the warring factions are to gether in a last ditch attempt at peace. A mystery must be solved and an evil presence overcome before the universe can be bought back from the brink of destruction. *May 9*

Brazil. Warners (15). Directed by Terry Gilliam, starring Jonathan Pryce, Robert De Niro, Michael Palin, Bob Hoskins. Brilliant, surreal vision of red tape gone insane. After a bureaucratic error, Pryce finds his ideal woman in the shape of Kim Greist. Highly recommended. 1985. *May 9*

The Church. Reflective (18). Directed by Michelle Soave, starring Hugh Quarshie, Tomas Arana, Fedor Chaliapin. Screenplay co-written by Dario Argento, the Hammer of Italy. In the Dark Ages, a whole village is massacred on suspicion of witchcraft. On the site of the mass grave now stands a cathedral; when structural damage releases the ancient demons entombed beneath the sacred walls, a horrifying day of resurrection is at hand. 1989. 98m. *Apr 25*

Demolition Man. Warners. Directed by Marco Brambilla, starring Sylvester Stallone, Wesley Snipes. Solidly enjoyable SF yarn with Stallone as a no-holds-barred cop and Snipes a no-holds-barred bad guy. Both get frozen, and awake in the future. No pretence to literary or filmic value here, just lots of explosions. Rental. 1993. 110m. *May 27*

Scanner Cop. Reflective (18). Directed by Pierre David, starring Daniel Quinn, Darlanne Fluegel, Richard Lynch. After a tormented childhood, Sam Staziak (Quinn) is a cop and a Scanner (the Cronenberg kind), on the trail of a demented neurosurgeon (Lynch). Fourth in the series, better than the last. 1993. 90m. *Apr 18*

True Romance. Warners (18). Directed by Tony Scott, starring Christian Slater, Patricia Arquette. Road movie by Pete Taylor's fave writer, Quentin Tarantino. A useful fill-in whilst the BBFC dither over cuts in *Reservoir Dogs*. The only down point is a lack of Harvey Keitel. Rental. 1993. 113m. *Jun 10*

ANIME

News: Kiseki releases for April 20 include the subtitled **Gunbusters Episodes 1-2**: Earth's first interstellar fleet was destroyed by space monsters, now it's up to a younger generation to do battle against the threat, and **Urotsokiduji III Part 2**.

Scheduled May releases are more **Ambassador Magma**, more **Gunbusters**, plus **Clash of the Bionoids** and **Black Magic M66**.

Ambassador Magma (Kiseki, tbc). Directed by Hidehito Ueda, adapting the manga by Osamu Tezuka. Three episodes of what could be perfect for childrens television. The ancient god of darkness, Goa, is awakened and attempts to take control of the Earth. His old enemy, Magma, a golden giant, is also reawakened to protect the planet. Meanwhile, a journalist, Atsuchi Marakami, and his son Mamoru, try to uncover evidence of an alien invasion. 1993. 90m. *Apr 20*

Battle Angel Alita (Manga, 15). Directed by Hiroshi Fukutome, adapting the manga, *Gunnm* by Yukito Kishiro. Manga's best dubbing effort to date. Two chapters set in a bleak future earth where the rich live in a huge floating, trash-free city, dumping their waste on the inhabitants below. Cybernetic doctor/mechanic, Dr. Ido stumbles upon a hunter-warrior cyborg, painstakingly rebuilding her, not realising her full potential. 60m. *Apr*

Catgirl: Nuku-Nuku (Crusader, PG). Three chapters of hilarious, ultra-cute adventure. The stories alone are recommended, but are brought into a new dimension with regional dubbing. Primarily a family drama, an anime/comedy *Kramer Vs Kramer*, with Professor Kyu leaving wife, and corporate head, Akiko Mishima, taking son Ryun with him. No court room battles here - she sends in a helicopter gunship and an armoured octopus, leaving the android cat/girl of the title to save the day. 90m. *Mar*

The Guyver 1: Genesis of the Guyver (Manga, 15). Directed by Koshi Ishiguro. Solid, if undemanding Manga release: starts at school, up pop the demonic monsters and, yes, there are the tentacles. However, it's nicely done in a story concerning stolen bio-weapon units and the efforts of a mysterious corporation to get them back using Zoanoids who are big and nasty. Schoolkid-in-love, Sho Fukamachi accidentally becomes Guyver Unit 1. There's room for development over the next twelve chapters; next month, Guyver Unit 2 turns up. Nicely packaged with an Alan Grant/Tony Luke strip on the reverse of the video cover. 30m. *Apr*

Kamasutra (Western Connection, 18). Directed by Masayuki Ozeki. Go Nagai's interpretation of the Indian book of domestic etiquette unconvincingly turned into a sex-comedy which could easily have been called Carry on Kamasutra. An archaological dig reveals a princess encased in ice, there's a cup of eternal life, a little unrevealing grunt 'n' groan, and little to recommend it. Subtitled. 43m. *Apr 11*

TELEVISION

News: Watch out for **Babylon 5** on Channel 4 which will begin transmission on May 9th in their 6 o'clock slot. **Joe 90** will be appearing at the end of April on BBC1 as part of the *Live and Kicking* Saturday morning show. TV related videos due in April include **Star Trek: The Next Generation #78: Interface/Gambit** and **Deep Space Nine #12: The Siege/Invasive Procedures**, plus further tapes featuring **The Saint**, **Avengers**, **New Avengers** and **The Champions**.

AUDIO

Life the Universe and Everything is the third release from Isis Audio Books in their run of *Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* cassettes read by author Douglas Adams. Released in May in a box-set of 4 cassettes, the story runs almost five-and-a-half hours of Adams (who sounds, in places, remarkably like the radio actors). Priced £14.99.

GAMES

Sega have come up with an interactive game "with more twists and turns than a twisty turny thing": **Double Switch** stars Debbie *(Blondie)* Harry and Corey *(Lost Boys)* Haim. Directed by Mary Lambert (best known for various Madonna videos and the *Pet Semetery* movies). Set in a hotel, with plenty of shady dealings and some colourful locals running riot in the building, a sinister plot begins to unfold. Music is provided by Thomas Dolby. It's available in April. Also available this month is **Jurassic Park** with a unique on-line information source in Dr. Robert T. Bakker, the palaeontologist who advised on the game. Stealing dinosaur eggs has never been so much fun.

MAGAZINES

Animenia #3. £1.60 for 60 A5 pages; a mixture of anime news, reviews and strips. The printing quality could do with some more thought, as some parts were almost impossible to read, scanned pictures almost impossible to decipher, and some features printed on a horrible flock wallpaper effect which, whilst a nice idea, just doesn't work - it simply means less words per page. A longish review of Manga Video was the winner here. Subscriptions are £7.50 from Joshua P. CLark, 2 Birkdale Drive, Immingham, Grimsby, South Humberside DN40 2LB.

Comics Forum #6 (Spr/Sum 1994). £2.95. Journal of the Comic Creators Guild with a slew of Superman features, including interviews with Julius Schwartz & Barry Kitson, reviews by Richard Reynolds, Kent Worcester, artwork and a feature on Jack Kirby. Available from all good comic shops.

Eagle Times v7:1 (Spr 1994). 52 pages of *Eagle* nostalgia ranging from interviews with original Riders of the Range artist Jack Daniel to a look at the role of Professor Peabody in the Dan Dare strip, taking in a P.C. 49 text story, and features on Frank Humphris, Frank Bellamy and Ron Turner on the way. Subscriptions information from Keith Howard, 25a Station Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2UA.

TRADING CARDS

Batman: Saga of the Dark Knight (Skybox). 100 card set with original art by Dave Dorman, Brian Stelfreeze, John Bolton, Mike Mignola, Barry Kitson and many others, with a 5-card specta-etched subset to collect and a one-off special SkyDisc card - a feature which will continue in subsequent Skybox/DC card sets.

Conan II All Chromium Collector Cards (Comic Images) is a collection of 90 paintings from covers of *Savage Sword of Conan*, following last years successful set. Also included are 6 prism cards, a 3-card Rainbow Foil subset, and a limited edition gold foil medallion card.

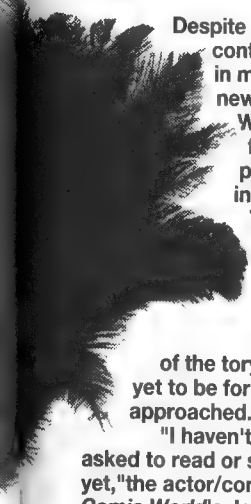
More Beyond Bizarre (Comic Images) is a new series featuring the work of surrealist Jim Warren. Bonus cards include 6 prism cards, 500 randomly inserted autographed cards, a 3-card subset and a limited edition medallion card.

EVENTS

17 Apr **London**. TUC Centre, Great Russell Street. Comic Mart. Deborah Hyde will also be signing copies of her Jack the Ripper trading card set, *Autumn of Fear*.
23 Apr **Manchester**. Sachas Hotel, Tibb Street, Piccadilly. Comic & Card Mart.
24 Apr **Liverpool**. Gladstone/Forte Crest Hotel, Lord Nelson Street. Comic Mart.
30 Apr **Sheffield**. Main Hall, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street. Comic Mart & Film Fair.
30 Apr **Cardiff**. Central Hotel, St. Mary's Street. Comic Mart.
1 May **London**. Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way.
7 May **Stoke-on-Trent**. YMCA, Harding Road, Hanley. Comic Mart.
15 May **Milton Keynes**. Woughton Centre, Rainbow Drive, Leadenhall. Comic, TV & Sci-Fi Fair.
21 May **Gloucester**. Leisure Centre, Bruton Way. Comic Mart.
21 May **Nottingham**. Victoria Leisure Centre, Gelding Street. Comic Mart.
22 May **London**. Camden Centre, Bidborough Street. Comic Mart.
28 May **Manchester**. Parkers Hotel, Corporation Street. Comic Mart.
4 Jun **Birmingham**. Church Centre, Carrs Lane. Comic Mart & Film Fair.
12 Jun **Leicester**. YMCA, Granby Street. Comic Mart.

Multi Media was compiled by Neil Cooper, Steve Holland, Dave McLoughlin, John Mosby, Pete Taylor and an infinite number of monkeys. Please send information and review material to Comic World, Castle House, 97 High Street, Colchester, Essex CO1 1TH.

e Villains of BATMAN III



Despite rumours to the contrary appearing in many daily newspapers, Robin Williams is far from certain to play The Riddler in Batman III. Though he would be ideal for the role and would seem to be favourite if the character is part of the tory, Williams has yet to be formally approached.

"I haven't even been asked to read or seen a script yet,"the actor/comedian told *Comic World*'s John Mosby on a recent trip to the U.K. to publicise Mrs. Doubtfire.

Robin is currently riding on the success of the recent Tootsie-esque hit and his vocal role in Aladdin and can pick and choose his next projects. However, Williams did not rule out his participation:

"I've played a lot of sympathetic, nice-guy type parts. I think it would be pretty interesting to play an unsympathetic villanous type and (The Riddler) would be a fascinating character to play. Certainly if the script was good enough and I was asked to...I'd love to!"

Other contenders for the role are apparently John Malcovich and Robert De Niro... but our money's on Mork, the only potential stumbling block being rights over merchandising, Williams already being in dispute with Disney over his vocalising in Aladdin.

The second villain, Two-Face, will probably go to Oscar winner, Tommy Lee Jones, whose supporting roles have recently included Under Siege and The Fugitive. Currently filming Cobb, Jones would replace Billy Dee Williams, who played Two-Face's alter ego, Harvey Dent, in the first movie. Williams played the role on the understanding that he would have first option on Two-Face if the character was ever used; it's almost certainly a financial move rather than any fear of having two actors with the same name in the cast.

Casting began in February for Robin, but no announcements have been made yet. The film will begin shooting in September.

Continued from Page 37

that's also the way Vertigo think, and it's in the planning stages. Although not due for another year, artist Kent Williams is already lined up, and...the phone call? That was to set up a meeting so they could hammer out the plot.

"Part of it came from loving what Matt is doing with American pulp tradition and looking at all the interesting British pulp traditions. Leaving aside Penny Dreadfuls, when you get into the 1930s you've got Leslie Charteris and The Saint, the Baron snitching the boodle, Sexton Blake, Peter Cheyney...You've got Dennis Wheatley - the Duc de Richelieu. I was talking to Matt and saying it would be nice to do something together in which we get to play with British pulp tradition the same way that he's playing with the American pulps.

"We haven't had the big plot meeting yet, so all can change, but most of the action will take place in the manor house where much of *Sandman #1* took place" (the Witch Cross home of Roderick Burgess) "and much of it will be a country house mystery. It takes place before World War Two, and there will be blackmail and magic, not to mention the Sandman locked up in a glass jar in the cellar.

"I've been playing around with creating a British pulp hero because what the world really needs right now is a good, 1930s, British pulp hero with his fist always raised to smite the ungodly. So I've created a young British gentleman called The Cannon who leaves a little drawing with a cannon wherever he goes. During the day he's probably the vicar in a little local parish.

"I want him to be polite. I want him to be nice, because I genuinely enjoy what Matt's been doing with taking apart traditions and cliches from today's perspective - examining the Yellow Peril and all that. Try and read a Fu Manchu novel today and you find these hoards of evil, torturing, yellow fiends that were waiting in the Orient to engulf us all. This stuff is very strange and very offensive and definitely comes from a different time.

"You also had really strange things like Bulldog Drummond. I mean, I remember reading those when I was a schoolboy and being offended by them, and I was a very hard schoolboy to offend."

If you've not read 'Sapper' and his clean-limbed Englishman adventurer - and as he was around in the 1920s that's not surprising - they're a real eye-opener as Bulldog slaps down any 'wog', 'dago' or 'hun' that dares cast a slanty eye over a young English rose. "There's a line between not politically correct and the literature of hate," growls Neil, "and by the time you get to Bulldog Drummond it's Black shirt literature; by definition, every nasty foreigner, every evil jew, needs to be beaten up and thrown down the stairs." Which is exactly what happened in Sapper's novels. Traditional British pulp fiction was often overtly right-wing and anti-semitic and read today it leaves a nasty taste in your mouth: "Take a look at the beginning of Dennis Wheatley's *The Devil Rides Out* where you get the Duc de Richelieu turning up to a party given by his friend, Simon (Aaron) - who's a bit suspect anyway because he's Jewish - and meets these people who are *obviously* part of some evil satanic ring because one of them has a hair lip, one of them is black, one of them is probably a lesbian and one of them is an albino - so you know they're satanists from the word go!"

SHOUTING, HITTING, AND RUNNING AROUND

With *Death* proving so popular this

MARK BUCKING

"What am I doing right now? I'm flicking through some comics looking for the design of Polaris' costume so I can get it right on a cover - I'm back on *Doctor Strange* covers."Mark Buckingham - the tradition for shortening people's names has left him answering to the name Bucky - swept up the Best Inker category ahead of Mark Farmer and Al Williamson, primarily for *Death: The High Cost of Living*, although that's only one aspect of his work. Don't forget he's also a noted penciller, when he gets the time, having worked on *Miracleman* for - thanks to his publishers - too many years and last years *Immortalis* mini-series. And then there's his finishes on *Ghost Rider 2099* with Chris Bachalo, which we looked at last month. That's some schedule...

"I'm also inking *Generation-X*. Chris has actually now left *Ghost Rider 2099* and I'm going to be pencilling a couple of issues before Peter Gross takes over. We start *Generation-X* in a couple of weeks time (so he should be working on it as you read this): there's going to be an ashcan edition, a little ten-page affair. I'm also doing a four-issue mini-series for Vertigo called *The Inspector* which Warren Ellis is writing. It should be very, very good - rush out and order it because it'll be full of weird, grotesque stuff, and violence." Makes you wonder how much a writer puts of himself into his work, no? (Hey, Warren. Only kidding). "I've just pencilled a couple of issues of *Shade the Changing Man*, and I'll be inking the next *Death* mini-series as well which is called *The Time of Your Life*." If that's not enough there's a limited edition portfolio, to be called *The Mark Buckingham Port and Lemon Folio*: "I was trying to think of a pun on the name...It'll probably be out for UKCAC in an edition of about 1,000."

With the amount (and quality) of work coming out over the next year it looks suspiciously like it might be worth putting a small bet on Bucky for next year. Although there's no statuette to pick up and no glittering luncheon to attend, the *Comic World* reader's awards does have one significant difference to other awards: they're voted for by fans.

"This is why I like it," says Mark. "It's something that the general public have an interest in rather than other awards where creators vote. You tend to just vote for your mates and that's it. So it's like winning by default because you happen to get on

OH, IT WAS WONDERFUL. IT WAS FILLED WITH PEOPLE. I GOT TO BREATHE AND EAT AND...ALL SORTS OF STUFF.
I WISH IT COULD HAVE GONE ON FOR-EVER. I WISH IT DIDN'T HAVE TO END LIKE THAT...
IT ALWAYS ENDS THAT'S WHAT GIVES IT VALUE
WHEN YOU GET TO BE ALIVE, EVEN FOR A DAY...
WELL, THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO STOP LIVING.
I SUPPOSE SO
WAS IT WORTH IT?
I...I DON'T KNOW. I THINK SO. I HOPE SO. I MET SUCH NEAT PEOPLE.
AND I HEARD A SONG AND WENT IN A TAXI, AND I HAD A HOT DOG AND A BAGEL AND...
I WISH IT COULD HAVE GONE ON FOR-EVER.
TAKE MY HAND, DIDI.

year, the writing and artistic team are getting back together again for a new series. Makes next year's awards a foregone conclusion, perhaps. "Would that it were that easy," Neil laughs.

"But I'm particularly pleased that *Death* was so well received because I loved writing it. My only regret was that it wasn't longer; I wish it had been 4 parts rather than 3." A problem which should be remedied with the next series. "Working with Chris is such a joy. So much fun."

Another returning line-up is that of *Spawn #9*: "I'm talking to Todd about doing a 3-part *Angela* mini-series which definitely won't win any awards. That issue of *Spawn* last year-- I'd never written a comic which was all shouting and running around before. And hitting. Shouting, hitting and running around. I kind of like the idea of doing it again. Three issues. I could break it up into that: no more beginning, middle and end, just shouting, running around, then hitting for serious dramatic effect.

"It's going to have an Angel, but she's not actually a very nice person and she's arrested by the Forces of Heaven for losing equipment - and a large number of Angels are going to try busting her out. Then everybody's running around Heaven, busting in and out of jail. I may even get Spawn in there too. Maybe even some dinosaurs."

On a more serious note, folks: "The other thing I'm doing is working on the BBC series, *Neverwhere*, for BBC2. The wheels of the BBC grind slow, but things are kind of grinding. I did the pilot episode for them two years ago, and we sat around for 18 months while they sat on it. Then they decided they like it and flew me over for story conferences, and a few months ago decided that they had gone OK and commissioned episodes 2 and 3. I've just turned in a first draft of episode 2 and I'm working on episode 3 right now. When things start moving on this they'll probably move very fast - you'll be driving along and think *That TV series wasn't there the last time we came past!*

"I'm also thinking right now of doing a spoken word CD, chiefly because I'd been doing readings at various conventions over the past year-and-a-half and noticed that there was a healthy bootleg trade, so I'm probably going to do a studio quality CD. Whether they'll make it over to the UK properly, I don't know. I mean, *Angels and Visitations*, the DreamHaven book, had a first printing of 10,000 copies, of which Titan's initial order was something like 25. I don't get the impression that many copies got over to England."

Which, in a way, is a shame, because it's a nice collection of miscellania ranging from short stories to verse and even adds a dash of non-fiction to the cocktail.

And that's where we take our leave of Neil, leaving him to Alice Cooper and Angela, and to bringing life back to Death and putting an end to the Endless, tying up the loose threads of *Sandman*, and maybe tying up the laces of his shoes. Which just leaves me to dream up a title. Where's inspiration when you really need it? I had the same problem a few days ago when I was trying to think of some way to celebrate the Readers Poll, and thought that it might be worth contacting the winners and maybe getting a couple of words from them? So I phoned Neil up and said, "You've just whitewashed everybody in the Awards." CW

H A M

with a lot of people rather than on any real merit."

That doesn't mean he won't be buying a lot of drinks over the next year to assure himself of a first place... CW

(Jun 28), and **Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #63** (Jun 28), with a two-part **KnightsEnd Aftermath** appearing in **Robin #9** and **Catwoman #13**, both shipping July 5th. Batman editor, Doug Moench, has promised that all the loose ends from *Knightfall* will be tied up in *KnightsEnd*, although the ramifications are far from over: "If you expect things to be exactly as they were before 'Knightfall' began, you're in for a surprise".

Following the conclusion, the Batman titles prepare for **Zero Hour**. **Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #64** is the one-shot 'Terminus' by Jamie Delano, Chris Bachalo & Mark Pennington, whilst #65 begins a 4-part story by J.M. DeMatteis & Joe Staton who try to answer the question What if the Joker believed he had killed the Batman? in 'Going Sane'; in #69-70 Steven Grant & Mike Zeck present 'Criminals'.

The big news, however, will be the launch of an ongoing **Azrael** title in October, to be written by Dennis O'Neil with art by Barry Kitson & James Pascoe. Azrael is a hereditary position. Who will don the mantle of the Order of St. Dumas and become the new Angel of Vengeance?

Batman Vs Predator II: Bloodmatch pitches Gotham's champion against an impetuous Predator who illegally decides to take on the Dark Knight. It's an illegal move with Predators, and the young turk is himself hunted by police Predators. Meanwhile, Batman and the Huntress are closing in on a crimelord who has hired the best assassins in the world to take out Batman, so the hunter becomes the hunted while out hunting. The Predator hunter is also hunted whilst he hunts. Their paths will no doubt cross and re-cross in this 4-issue mini series by Doug Moench, Paul Gulacy & Terry Austin.

Gerard Jones & Mark Badger, the team behind *Run, Riddler, Run* combine forces again for **Batman: Jazz**, a 3-issue series beginning in November which introduces the syncopated threat of the Bop Brothers who are splitting the jazz community of Gotham with violence, and heralding the return of a famous jazz musician long-thought dead.

And another reuniting team: Alan Grant & Kev O'Neill present **Batman: Mitefall**. Bob Overdog, star of *Legends of the Dark Mite*...er, *Knight #38* is one of the crooks set free from Arkham by Bane. He doesn't particularly want to go, and when he does he wants to go straight. He discovers that the whole Mite dimension has been taken over by Bane-Mite, and has to make the ultimate sacrifice...if you believe in Mites, that is.

Batman: Ten Nights of the Beast reprints *Batman #417-420* by Jim Starlin, Jim Aparo & Mike DeCarlo from 1989 as a 96-page one-shot, due August.

SUPERMAN

One big event over the summer is the **Worlds Collide** crossover with the Milestone Dakota Universe, which runs through **Superboy #7**, **Superman: The Man of Steel #36**, and **Steel #7** in June. **Superman #92** and **Adventures of Superman #515** is the two-part 'Massacre in Metropolis', featuring the alien menace, Massacre, and following the 'Fall of Metropolis', David Michelinie becomes the regular writer of **Action Comics #702**.

Post *Zero Hour* storylines include a trip to outer space for John Henry Irons in **Steel**, the regular Superman titles will at first focus on Clark's early years and introduce a new villain in Conduit, a metahuman who will play an important part in Superman's life; in **Action Comics**, when the Superman Memorial is damaged during a battle and workmen come to clean up the mess, they discover something in Superman's tomb that will "stun the world"; the story will culminate in **Superman #100**.

The Guardians of Metropolis is a 4-part series launching in October written and inked by Karl Kesel with pencils by Kieron Dwyer, featuring the Guardian and the Newsboy Legion culminating with a revamped Newsboy Legion and a revitalised Guardian.

Metropolis: Special Crimes Unit is another 4-part series focusing on the S.C.U. and Maggie Sawyer. Lois Lane will be joining the cast as Superman and the S.C.U. are challenged by an influential ecologist, Noah, and eco-terrorist, Terra-Man. Cindy Goff writes, with art by Peter Krause & Jose Marzan, Jr.

ZERO HOUR

The big summer event, already building up in a number of DC titles, which culminates in a 5-part, weekly series, **Zero Hour: Crisis in Time** which begins in July and runs through August, the biggest shake up the DC Universe has had since *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. Events have already begun in the pages of some titles: as time begins to unwind you'll find strange anomalies in 20th century continuity, and in the 30th century things are even worse. Reality begins to fragment. The machinations of individual heroes and of villains who try to take advantage of time's distortion may be nothing compared to the schemes of the ultimate criminal mastermind.

Beginning with issue 4 and continuing backwards to issue Zero, *Zero Hour* is written and pencilled by Dan Jurgens with inks by Jerry Ordway - see our interview with Jerry this issue for news of his involvement. Events in the book will lead to major changes in many titles and the launch of numerous spin offs, including a special Zero month for all October cover dated issues, offering readers a perfect jumping on point to all DC Universe titles.

A special spoiler warning to those of you who want to watch events unfold each month...but for those who can't wait:

Zero Hour has already begun: **Valor #17** marked the first link in the chain of events that will culminate in August, but the action picks up in **Legionnaires #17**, due to ship on June 14th, the first chapter in the 6-part 'End of an Era' storyline which crosses over into **Valor #22**, **Legion of Super-Heroes #60** and continues in the following month's publications. The ongoing power struggle with Mordru, Glorith and the Time Trapper reaches critical mass as their individual attempts to reshape reality threaten to unravel the 30th century. To preserve what they've always coveted, Mordru and Glorith join forces against the Time Trapper, and the chaos storm that sweeps through the continuum draws the heroes into its vortex.

Team Titans #20 began a five issue countdown to Zero Hour, the team discovering that there are hundreds of 'Manchurian Candidate' agents in place to carry out a murderous plot. Meanwhile, Redwing's metamorphosis into Warhawk, culminates in #23, which also sees Donna Troy return - still stunned by the departure of her husband - as a Darkstar. Not everyone is going to survive Zero Hour.

There are some major changes occurring in **L.E.G.I.O.N. '94**, the team still trying to cope with the deaths of Captain Comet and Lady Quark. Dox's power begins to slip and his son's powers begins to manifest themselves. Ultra Boy of the Legion of Super-Heroes arrives in *L.E.G.I.O.N. '94 #69* to resolve his cross-time romance with Phase. And events come to a head in #70, a 48-page special which will launch the spin- off **R.E.B.E.L.S. '94.**

R.E.B.E.L.S. '94? Yes. Vril Dox, Stealth and a few other loyal refugees from the L.E.G.I.O.N. become fugitives trying to clear their names and thwart the plans of Lyrl Dox, whose powers have grown frighteningly in the pages of *L.E.G.I.O.N. '94*. Now, using the power of the L.E.G.I.O.N., Lyrl begins to conquer whole planets, and his father's team is all that stands in the way.

The disruptive effects of Zero Hour force Courtney Mason to learn the true nature of the shadow realm where Animus originates. Star of the recently launched **Anima**, at 16, Courtney and her 14-year-old brother, who were supposed to reach adulthood before their true powers manifested themselves, may not be ready to face The Nameless One.

Another recent newcomer, **Damage**, also has to grow up quickly: high-school student Grant Emerson is still trying to learn the truth about his parents, and during Zero Hour confronts Munro, who may or may not know something. The confrontation leads to a catastrophic event, with a major super-villain revealed behind the scenes in a story that will culminate in a cross-over with *The New Titans* where Grant's powers undergo some unexpected changes.

As for **The New Titans** themselves, they'll be gaining some more members in the shape of Green Lantern, Green Arrow, and the new Darkstar, Donna Troy, adding to the existing team of Pantha, Phantasm, Red Star, Changeling, Starfire, Baby Wildebeest and the returning Aqualad. With Nightwing reassessing his life, there's a battle for the leadership and trouble

brewing with the now-evil Raven.

The Ray, now in his own series, discovers something that changes everything he knew about his past, and - post-Zero Hour - he'll be setting off on a galaxy-spanning adventure.

The storyline which began in **The Outsiders** issue 1 is wrapped up in issues 10- 11, 'Final Blood', as the team pick up a former enemy as a member. Zero Hour will reveal a schism in the group that will pit hero against hero.

The current 3-issue 'Reckless Youth' storyline reintroduces Iris West and a new ally, Bart Allen, a.k.a. Impulse, to **Flash**. On the cusp of Zero Hour, Iris and Bart find themselves in the 30th century, desperately trying to get back in time to save Bart's life since he cannot control his superspeed and is ageing at an incredible rate. Wally West and his new protege are propelled towards issue 100 in a series called 'Terminal Velocity'.

The post-Zero Hour **Darkstars** are in disarray and in need of leadership which they find in the shape of John Stewart, late of the Green Lantern Corps (*Green Lantern: Mosaic*). Donna Troy, rejected by the New Titans, also joins. The Darkstars need all the help they can get when an intergalactic war breaks out - and a membership drive will be adding more familiar faces to the team in the future. Mike Collins joins as penciller of the series.

The new **Green Lantern**, Kyle Rayner, is still battling Mongul, meeting up with Superman in #53, and faces another DC supervillain in #54. Kyle will then have to face the original Green Lantern, Alan Scott, and the now rogue Hal Jordan for ultimate power of the Lantern.

Hawkman will be redefined by Zero Hour, and is already facing the malevolent Hawk God, responsible for the creation of the legendary Nth metal and all the permutations of Hawk Man throughout time. Now the Hawk God (his origin revealed in #12) is reabsorbing every manifestation of Hawk-power back into himself.

Wonder Woman is also in for some big changes. Carpeted for her actions when her friend Vanessa is kidnapped, her fitness is called into doubt, and she quits. A new Wonder Woman is chosen, and with Diana returning to Man's World to fight crime, how will the world cope with two Wonder Women?

Other major DC heroes will also be effected by the events in and surrounding Zero Hour.

Deathstroke the Terminator #39 guest stars Green Arrow and Vigilante, all on the trail of Dr. Death, a physician turned hitman. Ed Hannigan is guest artist for that issue. Further in the future you'll be able to witness Slade's first ever mission, and later still becomes a pariah to the DC Universe when he is unable to prove that an assassination he performed was for the good of the country.

Andrew Van Horn is a relative newcomer to superheroics. Zero Hour will see the debut of a new supervillain for **Gunfire** to battle, the identity of whom will "shock and amaze everyone".

Guy Gardner will shortly be waking from his one-issue coma (next month as you read this), and heads off for the Nabba Jungle to regain the powers he lost when Hal Jordan destroyed his ring, seeking the legendary Water of Warriors which bestows, so legend has it, super-powers. But even after he drinks the water (this is after Zero Hour and a few battles with dinosaurs) he doesn't realise he will have to make a sacrifice to cause his new powers to kick in.

Green Arrow is at a loss after his split with Black Canary, at something of a loss. Over the next couple of months he has disputes in Dallas with Catwoman, in New Orleans, encounters the Justice League in New York and finds himself (in the July shipping issue 89) in Gotham and enmeshed in a time anomaly. The story climaxes in Zero Hour after which new writer Kelley Puckett takes him to a monastery where he reassesses his life and work, eventually becoming an outlaw in the company of a young monk.

June 21 will see the release of **The Demon #50**, a double-sized special looking back at an untold story from the 16th century. Elsewhen, Etrigan has his own plans for the soon to be born son of Jason Blood and Glenda.

The Spectre #19 begins a 4-part story concerning 'The Spear of Destiny' which concludes in #22 with a confrontation with Superman. The Zero Hour tie-in provides a glimpse of the first human soul ever to wield the vast power of The Spectre.

Internal and external forces are trying to tear the **Justice League America** apart, with members blaming each other for the handling of the 'Judgement Day' affair. 'Aftershock' begins in *Justice League America #91* and continues in **Justice League Task Force #15** and **Justice League International #67**. The three titles continue to be linked until Zero Hour, with 'Return of a Hero' running through the September cover dated issues, the Hero being Triumph, who is returning after ten years in exile. All three titles will move off in new directions following Zero Hour.

For fans of the old **Justice League of America** there's a hardcover Archives volume (#3) gathering together *Justice League of America #17-22* due late this year. **Legion of Super-Heroes Volume 5** brings together stories from *Adventure Comics #340- 349* which not only features a major turning point for the Legion, but also features the first work of youthful Jim Shooter.

A number of new titles will spin out of Zero Hour, a whole batch of them in August and September, but pre-Zero Hour there's **Aquaman**, a new ongoing monthly by Peter David, Marty Egeland & Brad Vancata. David, who penned *Aquaman: Time and Tide*, opens the series with Aqualad needing the aid of his Sea King partner to locate a sunken submarine. In rescuing the sub the pair clash with Charybdis, an undersea demon who is holding someone prisoner - Dolphin. Could she become the new romantic interest now that Mera has gone? More certain is the loss of Aquaman's ability to communicate with sea life, and a forthcoming crossover with Lobo, of all people.

Primal Force is a new, unlikely team that gathers to protect the Earth against the forces of ecological destruction, consisting of Jack O'Lantern (whose origin will be revealed in **Justice League Quarterly**), Golem (the clay monster from the pages of *Ragman* who desperately wants to become human), Tornado (ex-Justice League member, Red Tornado), Claw (a Chinese-American student who possessed by an unpredictable demon's hand) and Meridian (an all new superheroine). The first issue pitches them straight into battle with Cataclysm and a vast dark power. Steven Seagle pens the new ongoing series with art by Ken Hooper & Barbara Kaalberg.

Fate by John Frances Moore & penciller Tom Tenney is a new occult adventurer, the latest incarnation of Doctor Fate: Jared Stevens, a 'procurer' of rare artefacts who is asked to recover the helmet, cloak and amulet of Dr. Fate by Kent and Inza Nelson. When a monstrous force called the Hoard crosses the dimensions, Stevens has no choice but to become an instrument of supernatural balance.

David Knight is the oldest son of the Golden Age Starman, but don't get too attached to him as he is killed by The Mist in the first few pages of the new ongoing **Starman** by James Robinson, Tony Harris & Wade Von Grawbadger. The new, reluctant Starman is Jack Knight, the younger son of Ted Knight, who wants nothing more than to drop the hero act. The Mist has different plans.

The **Xenobrood** are discovered during an archaeological dig which uncovers a mysterious cylinder containing four crystals. The crystals become Thrasher, Blip, Astra and Zapatak, the heroes of a 7-issue series which debuts in August. written by Doug Moench with art by Tomm Coker, Chris Hunter, & Keith Aiken.

Chase Lawler makes a terrible sacrifice to save the woman he loves and his brother: he invokes a feral creature known as the Wild Huntsman. But the only way to recapture the Huntsman is to become the **Manhunter** and replace him, a hunter of lost souls. Written by Steven Grant, with art by Vincent Giarrano, the new ongoing monthly begins in September.

The Power of Shazam spins out into its own series, starring the classic Captain Marvel, written by Jerry Ordway and pencilled by Mike Wieringo, the first issue due for November shipping. More news in our Ordway interview this month.

Another much anticipated new series is **Sovereign 7** by Chris Claremont, Dwayne Turner & Richard Bennett. The seven are the last survivors of an interdimensional incident that decimated almost all levels of existence. We'll be revealing more in a major interview with Claremont in a couple of months time.

Looking ahead to early 1995 there's **Black Lightning**, a new ongoing monthly by Tony Isabella, Eddy Newell & Ron McCain: in Brick City after many years out of the spotlight, Jefferson Pierce resumes his identity as Black Lightning when drug wars split the city.

Some titles which were due in 1993 have still yet to see the light of day, and some have still yet to be scheduled, including **Batman: Man-Bat**, **Bob the Galactic Bum**, **Doctor Midnight**, **Killing Machine** and **Nine Princes in Amber** amongst them. More news on them as it arrives.

FOR SALE

ABBREVIATIONS

THIS IS A LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS YOU MAY FIND IN THE CLASSIFIEDS & LISTING SECTIONS

M.	Mint Perfect
N.M.	Nearly Mint
V.F./V.F.N.	Very Fine
F.N.	Fine
V.G.	Very Good
G.	Good
F.	Fair
P.	Poor
B.S.	Bookshop Stamp on Cover
T.S.	Taped Spine
R.S.	Rolled Spine
M.C.	Marked Cover
W.B.	Water Bent
P.S.	Price Stamp

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• **I'VE STILL** got piles! of comics from all publishers to clear before I can use our spare bedroom. Send 2 first class stamps for my lists. Brian Watson, Harrowden, 39 High Street, Sutton, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 2RA. (9)

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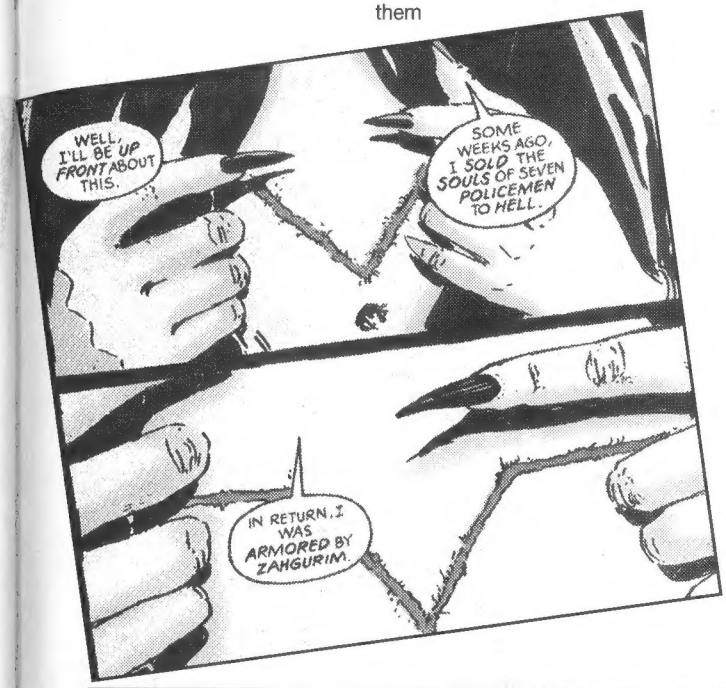
SMOKE DAMAGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

hell of a lot of them will be given inventory issues (which may not see print for a year), short back-up pieces, or little stints in the anthology *Marvel Comics Presents*.

Anyway. There are more professional comics creators than there's ever been. And there ain't the work around to feed them all. Why? Well, as we've seen, companies are dropping quicker'n a five-quid skirt on a ten-quid whore. Why? Well, here we factor in the retailer. When Retailer goes through his copy of *Previews*, he's looking for Name Recognition. He's been stiffed on a lot of books over the last few years, and he's looking for things that he knows he can sell. Nobody can afford to take risks anymore. A couple of years back, it was good to be James O'Barr, launching *The Crow* out of Caliber Press. Times were better, and a bunch of retailers taking a chance on a little black & white book led directly to the *Crow* film. Now, well; Paul Birch, Shane Oakley & Garry Crutchley can't find copies of their Caliber book *Stratosfear anywhere*, and Caliber are eschewing new creators for a big piece of their anthology book *Negative Burn* in favour of Brian Bolland's old 'Mr Mamoulian' strips and 'The Alan Moore Song Book '. I can find copies of *Negative Burn* easily. It's lower risk for the retailer, isn't it? Precisely why I've been arranging for pictures by Steve Pugh, Gary Erskine, Brian Bolland and P.Craig Russell to be stuck on the front of my Marvel book *Hellstorm* . It's taken companies and creators too long to realise the obvious — Retailers Are Not The Enemy. Retailer doesn't need to be tricked — he just needs to be offered something he can sell. And 400 books by people he's never heard of, and given no incentive to find out about, aren't, at the end of the day, going to buy him a meal.


WELL, I'LL BE UP FRONT ABOUT THIS.
SOME WEEKS AGO, I SOLD THE SOULS OF SEVEN POLICEMEN TO HELL.
IN RETURN, I WAS ARMORED BY ZAHGURIM.

So, once you've found a reason for people to buy your book, what then? Here's the worst part; Nobody Knows Anything. William Goldman said that about the movie business, and it holds true here. No-one really knows what's going to sell anymore. Who expected Jeff Smith to make a living off *Bone*? Who expected John Smith's first Vertigo book to be cut back to eight issues? I'd be an utter disaster in a betting shop. After the Image explosion-to-speculator crash period, I'd expected things to settle down. They haven't yet. Golden Rule — anyone who says they completely understand the state of the business, and cannot be surprised, is a liar. And I mean *anyone* who says this.

Have I set the scene effectively enough? I hope so, because this sort of thinking influences most, if not all, the decisions made at comics companies today. This is the climate in which I, as a pro writer, am operating. And if this 'working diary' idea is going to come off, you need to feel the same kind of weather I do.

With the amount of cigarettes I get through every afternoon when I think about work, is it any wonder that I gave this column that title?

Next time; I have no idea what I'll be writing about. Something that's actually about writing, I hope. I do requests. Oh, and if you want the whole story about Garth Ennis, Evil, and cutlery, you'll have to go out and buy *Hellstorm* issues 12-16. Sorry.

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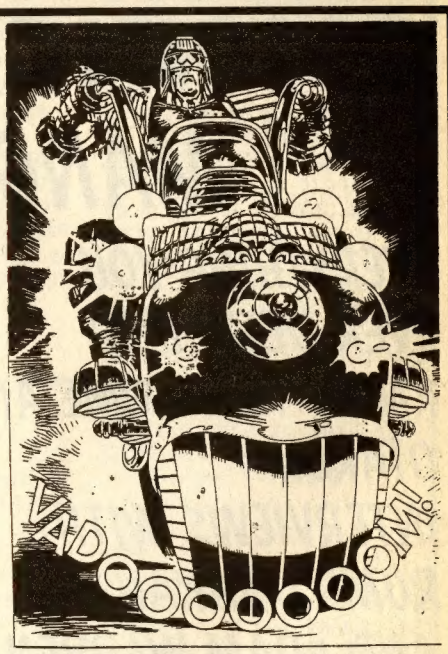

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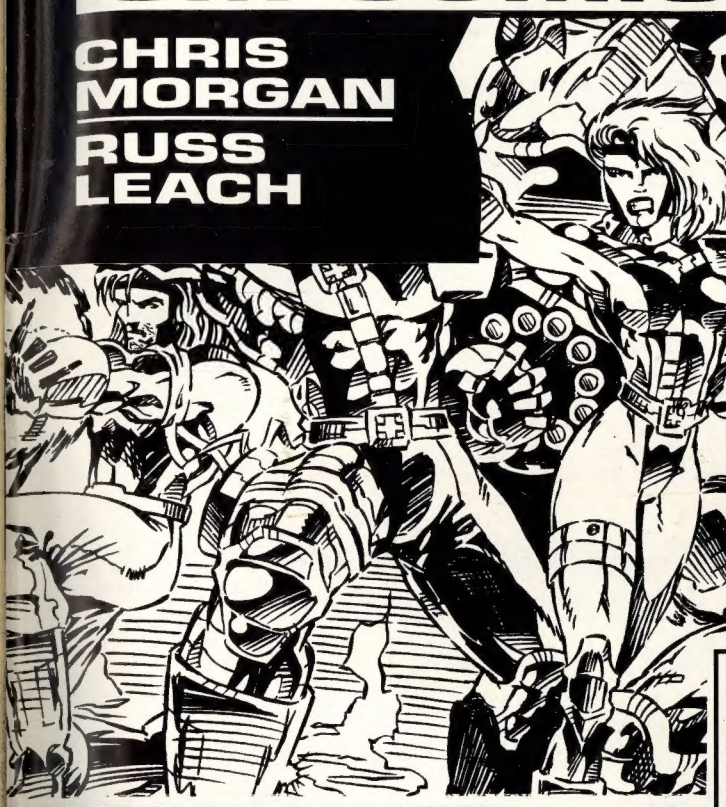

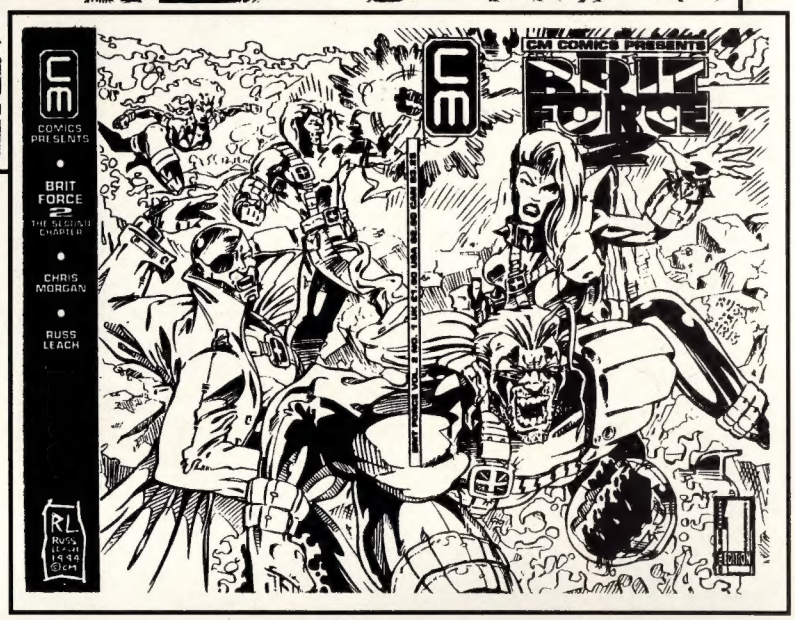

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